

Copyright
by
Jang Ho Moon
2011

**The Dissertation Committee for Jang Ho Moon Certifies that this is the approved
version of the following dissertation:**

**BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF A BRAND: THE IMPACT OF
PERCEIVED BACKSTAGE ON CONSUMER RESPONSES**

Committee:

Wei-Na Lee, Supervisor

Sejung Marina Choi

Jorge F. Peña

Tiffany Whittaker

Gary Wilcox

**BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF A BRAND: THE IMPACT OF
PERCEIVED BACKSTAGE ON CONSUMER RESPONSES**

by

Jang Ho Moon, B.Law, M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2011

Dedication

To my family

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Wei-Na Lee, my supervisor. Without her consistent support, guidance, and patience throughout my Ph.D. program, I would not be here today. There are not enough words to describe the depth of gratitude I owe her.

I would also like to thank all committee members for their invaluable directions, comments, and encouragements. Dr. Sejung Marina Choi, Dr. Jorge F. Peña, Dr. Tiffany Whittaker, and Dr. Gary Wilcox have been great supporters and teachers all through the years of my Ph.D. program. It would have been impossible to complete this work without their mentorship.

A great amount of thanks and appreciation must also be extended to my friends at the University of Texas at Austin. I have been and continue to be proud to be a part of such an awesome group of scholars. Thanks for your camaraderie and support throughout the years. Special thanks to Mihyun Kang, Dr. Kevin Thomas, and Jinnie Yoo for their extraordinary support.

I want to wholeheartedly thank my father, mother, and brother for their continued love and encouragement since day one. Last, but certainly not least, I want to give my special love to Joo Won Lee who has been there for me with unconditional love and patience.

BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF A BRAND: THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED BACKSTAGE ON CONSUMER RESPONSES

Jang Ho Moon, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Wei-Na Lee

Consumers watch what a brand does, listen to what a brand says, and expect to make a meaningful connection with a brand via social media. Thus, creating effective and persuasive content on behalf of a brand to attract consumers becomes an important task for today's marketers in social media.

In this dissertation, brand information disclosure is defined as any communication of a brand's relevant information, thoughts, and feelings, which are generated and deliberately disclosed by marketers. Further, disclosing perceived backstage of a brand by showing various behind-the-scenes information is proposed as a unique type of brand information disclosure, which is interpreted as a higher degree of brand information disclosure.

Motivated by the integral role of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships, the purpose of this dissertation study is to investigate the influence of a brand's disclosure of behind-the-scene information through social media. Specifically, this study explored how the brand information disclosure and the scarcity of disclosure would influence on consumer's intimacy, liking, and trust toward a brand as well as consumer-brand relationship quality. Further, the study attempts to investigate the moderating role of consumer's advertising skepticism on consumer responses.

The findings from this dissertation study illustrate that degree of brand information disclosure is a significant influence on consumers' brand evaluations and consumer-brand relationship quality in a social media environment. In addition, findings highlighted the influential role of the scarcity of information disclosure, depending upon the degree of information disclosure. Moreover, the findings evidenced how the consumer's general advertising skepticism can play a significant role when consumers are exposed to information from the brand via social media.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review	10
Consumer-Brand Relationship	10
Self-Disclsoure.....	15
The Concept of Self-Disclosure	15
Self-Disclosure in Human Relationship.....	16
The Dimensions of Self-Disclosure	18
The Consequences of Self-Disclosure	21
Self-disclosure and Intimacy.....	21
Self-disclosure and Liking	22
Self-disclosure and Trust	24
Factors Influencing Self-Disclosure	26
Scarcity of Self-Disclosure	26
Individual Characteristics	28
Self-Disclosure in Social Media	29
Self-Disclosure in the Marketing Context	31
Perceived Backstage of Brand	34
Behind-the-scenes Contents.....	34
Dramaturgical Theory	36
Front and Back Stage in the Marketing Context.....	38
Brand Information Disclsoure in Social Media	45
Behind-the-scene information about a Brand	45
Behind-the-scenes Information about Brand Promotion	45
Behind-the-scenes Information about Product/Service Production Process	47
Information about Employees.....	50

Definitions and Conceptualization.....	51
Brand Information Disclosure.....	51
Breadth of Brand Information Disclosure.....	51
Degree of Brand Information Disclosure.....	52
Scarcity of Brand Information Disclosure	52
Advertising Skepticism.....	54
Why Social Media?.....	56
Chapter 3 Guiding Framework and Research Hypotheses	59
Hypotheses.....	60
Brand Information Disclosure.....	60
Scarcity of Information Disclosure.....	61
Skepticism toward the Brand Information Disclosure.....	62
Chapter 4 Research Methodology.....	64
Pretest I	64
Overview.....	64
Results.....	65
Development of Stimulus Materials	66
Independent Variables and Manipulations.....	67
Degree of Information Disclosure	67
Scarcity of Information Disclosure	68
Consumer Skepticism	68
Pretest II.....	70
Overview.....	70
Results.....	71
Main Study.....	71
Experimental Design.....	71
Participants.....	73
Procedure	75
Dependent Variables.....	77

Chapter 5	Data Analysis and Results.....	81
	Preliminary Analysis.....	81
	Reliability Analysis.....	81
	Manipulation Check.....	81
	Hypothesis Testing.....	84
	Additional Analysis	101
Chapter 6	Discussion and Conclusion	103
	Answering the Research Questions	104
	Contributions.....	107
	Theoretical Contributions	107
	Managerial Implications	110
	Limitation and Future Research.....	111
Appendix A	Stimuli for Main Study.....	113
Appendix B	Questionnaires	121
References.....		130

List of Tables

Table 2.1:	Comparison and Contrast of Different Types of Backstage Exposure in Marketing Context	41
Table 2.2:	Categorization of Behind-the-Scenes Content in Brand's Social Media	46
Table 2.3:	Corporate Blog Content Categorization.....	53
Table 4.1:	Findings in Pretest I	66
Table 4.2:	Advertising Skepticism Items	69
Table 4.3:	Study Design	72
Table 4.4:	Sample Characteristics	74
Table 4.5:	Sample Social Media Usage	75
Table 4.6:	Consumer-Brand Relationship Scenario	76
Table 4.7:	Items of Liking toward a Brand	77
Table 4.8:	Items of Intimacy toward a Brand	78
Table 4.9:	Items of Trust toward a Brand	79
Table 4.10:	Items of Consumer-Brand Relationship.....	80
Table 5.1:	Reliability Analysis of Measurement Items.....	81
Table 5.2:	Manipulation Check Questions.....	83
Table 5.3:	Correlations among Dependent Variables	84
Table 5.4:	Multivariate Analysis of Variance Results	85
Table 5.5:	Univariate Analysis of Variance Results	86
Table 5.6:	Cell Means and Sample Sizes	88
Table 5.7:	Summary of Hypothesis Testing.....	102

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Examples of Behind-the-Scenes Information in Social Media.....	5
Figure 2.1: Traditional Conception of Front and Back Stage in Marketing.....	39
Figure 2.2: Adopted Conception of Front and Back Stage in Marketing.....	40
Figure 2.3: Examples of the Behind-the-Scenes Information about Brand Promotion	48
Figure 2.4: Behind-the-scenes Information about Product/Service Production Process	49
Figure 2.5: Information about Employees.....	50
Figure 2.6: Guiding Framework of Brand Informaiton Disclosure.....	58
Figure 5.1: Mean Intimacy toward a Brand by Degree, Scarcity, and Skepticism	94
Figure 5.2: Mean Liking toward a Brand by Degree, Scarcity, and Skepticism.	95
Figure 5.3: Mean Trust toward a Brand by Degree, Scarcity, and Skepticism ...	96
Figure 5.4: Mean Commitment (BR1) Rating by Degree, Scarcity, and Skepticism	97
Figure 5.5: Mean Intimacy (BR2) Rating by Degree, Scarcity, and Skepticism	98
Figure 5.6: Mean Interdependence (BR3) Rating by Degree, Scarcity, and Skepticism.....	99
Figure 5.7: Mean Love/Passion (BR4) Rating by Degree, Scarcity, and Skepticism	100

Chapter 1: Introduction

Today's marketers are eager to utilize social media as a viable marketing communication channel. Social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61). There are various formats of social media that include: blogs (e.g., Blogger), video sharing (e.g., YouTube), photo sharing (e.g., Flickr), social networks (e.g., Facebook), wikis (e.g., Wikipedia), virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life), micro-blogging (e.g., Twitter), and social bookmarking sites (e.g. Digg), among others. Social media platforms are changing the way brands connect to their consumers, providing a shift from the traditional one-way communication to an expanded dialogue between a company and its consumers (Qualman 2009).

In 2009, advertisers spent over \$2 billion on social media advertising, and predictions indicate that they may be spending up to \$3.5 billion by 2013 (eMarketer, 2009). More importantly, in addition to advertising spending, 79% of the top 100 companies in the *Fortune* Global 500 index are using at least one social media platform, namely *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Youtube*, or a corporate blog, to interact with their consumers (Burson-Marsteller 2010). Many brands these days use various social media platforms such as online venues where a brand and its consumers can communicate personally within a network and build a stronger consumer-brand relationship. Research on social media has, therefore, increasingly focused on its potential influence on developing and maintaining consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Brown et al. 2007; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010).

The consumer-brand relationship research suggests that the relationship between consumers and brands is similar to that of a human relationship (Fournier 1998). In her

inspiring exploratory study, Fournier (1998) argued that brands have an active relationship with consumers, providing a framework for characterizing and understanding consumer-brand relationships. According to this consumer-brand relationship paradigm, consumers often form relationships with brands in much the same way as they do with other human beings in a social context (Aggarwal 2004). The research question for consumer behavior researchers is why consumers interact with brands as they do with other human beings. Fournier (1998) suggested that relationships consist of a series of repeated exchanges between two parties known to each other. Thus, when a consumer has opportunities to continuously interact with a brand, it is highly possible that the consumer may form a social relationship with that brand. Another rationale for a brand as a social interaction partner can be found in animism (Aggarwal 2004). That is, some consumers may think that brands have a soul, just as a living being does. Based on this approach, scholars in marketing and consumer behavior have suggested that consumer-brand relationships share qualities similar to those of human relationships, as consumers consider brands viable relationship partners.

Since consumer-brand relationship is akin to an interpersonal relationship, what we know about interpersonal relationships can guide us in better understanding it. In the interpersonal relationship context, self-disclosure is a key construct. It has been defined as any information about oneself that a person verbally communicates to another person (Cozby 1973; Wheelless 1976). Derelega and Grzelak (1979) define self-disclosure as “any information exchange that refers to the self, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future” (p. 152). In every sort of interpersonal relationship, the exchange of self-disclosure plays an important role (Rubin 1973). In fact, of all the processes that have been theorized to be essential to relationship development, nothing has been considered more important than the interactants’

willingness to disclose information about themselves to each other (Harvey and Omarzu 1997). Given that brands and consumers form a relationship which is similar to an interpersonal relationship, a brand's information disclosure can be understood from the perspective of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationship.

In addition, previous scholars suggest that self-disclosure is a multi-dimensional construct since not every piece of self-disclosing information is identical in terms of its intimacy (Altman and Taylor 1973; Journauld 1971; Pearce and Sharp 1973; Wheelless 1976). The depth of information, which refers to the level of topic intimacy in self-disclosing information, especially, has been suggested as a critical parameter of intimate self-disclosure (Altman and Taylor 1973). For example, information and facts about oneself might be more or less personal, such as "my hometown" compared to "details about my sex life."

More importantly, relational outcomes of self-disclosure vary depending upon the degree of self-disclosure. Previous studies have reported that information receivers would show greater intimacy (e.g., Altman and Taylor 1973; Reis and Shaver 1988), liking (Chaikin and Delega 1974; Chelune 1972), and trust (e.g., Pederson and Higbee 1969; Wheelless and Grotz 1977) toward the discloser who presents more personal and intimate information.

Thus, in an interpersonal context, it is suggested that the degree of self-disclosing communication and its relational consequences vary depending upon the degree of intimacy. Likewise, when a brand discloses information about itself to consumers, the degree of self-revealing information can vary in terms of the depth (i.e., intimacy). Consequently, it is highly conceivable that the relational outcomes of brand information disclosure can be different depending upon the degree of self-disclosing information about a brand.

Then, what qualifies as more or less personal and intimate information of a brand? This dissertation study proposes that we consider the “perceived backstage” of a brand as the more personal and intimate aspects of the brand comparing to the frontstage of it. Based on Goffman’s (1959) Dramaturgical Theory (1959), marketing scholars (Grayson 1998; Gummesson 1990; Lovelock 1991; Shostack, 1981, 1987) have identified frontstage, backstage, and perceived backstage. Frontstage is defined in terms of “performances and regions perceived by the customer that are believed to have been created or altered for a customer audience,” whereas backstage refers to the firm’s “performances and regions not perceived by the consumer” (Grayson 1998, p.130). In addition to this conceptualization, Grayson (1998) proposed a third region called perceived backstage. Perceived backstage characterizes the firm’s “performances and region perceived by the customer and believed not to have been created or altered for customer audiences” (Grayson 1998, p. 130). Thus, consumers are exposed to this perceived backstage when marketers attempt to give the impression of revealing the backstage of the firm to consumers. For example, a clean and decorated reception area of a local car repair shop is considered a frontstage while the repair area is considered a backstage of the shop. When this car repair shop has its PR firm create a “behind-the-scenes” promotional video presenting the image of a clean and organized repair area, which is shown on a display in the reception space, customers can access the perceived backstage by seeing this “behind-the-scenes” video (Grayson 1998).

This idea of a perceived backstage explains the brand’s usage of social media usage where marketers easily upload and distribute their backstage information such as behind-the-scenes content, employee stories, or inside stories about a brand to their consumers. In other words, social media becomes a viable venue where consumers can access brands’ perceived backstage. For example, when *Disney* fans visit its corporate

blog (<http://disneyarks.disney.go.com/blog/>), they can find behind-the-scenes information about *Disneyland Park*, such as video clips revealing how the *Mickey Mouse*-looking giant pumpkins were carved, sanded, finished, painted, and installed with cranes for the Halloween celebration. Another example of disclosure of a brand's backstage activities can be easily found on *YouTube*, where consumers can watch numerous "makings of" commercials. For instance, T-mobile successfully generates thousands of consumer responses (2,185,381 views as of Jan 16, 2011) on the most popular video sharing site by disclosing the making of its "T-Mobile Dance" television commercial. Thus, social media provides backstage passes to those consumers who want to become part of "the scene" of their favorite brands (Lutters and Ackerman 2003).



Disney

Behind-the-Scenes Video: How We Created the Giant Pumpkins at the Entrance to Disneyland Park and on Main Street, U.S.A.



T-Mobile

Making of T-Mobile Dance: Exclusive behind the scenes footage of the T-Mobile Dance event

Figure 1.1: Examples of Behind-the-Scenes Information in Social Media

This privilege to have these backstage passes to a brand is perceived to be even more valuable when only a small number of people are allowed to have. According to Brock's commodity theory (1968), resources acquire value to the extent that they are perceived to be scarce or unavailable to others. Based on this assertion, previous self-disclosure studies have reported the scarcity effect of self-disclosure (e.g., Derelega and Grzelak 1979; Petty and Mirels 1981). That is, being selected as the recipient of a scarce message leads recipients to have a more positive evaluation of the discloser (e.g., Archer and Cook 1986). In general, people evaluate the discloser more favorably if they appear to be selective (Kleinke 1979). Thus, in the consumer-brand relationship context, it is highly conceivable that the relational outcomes of brand information disclosure will be even greater when the disclosing information is only available to selected consumers such as members of an online brand community rather than when the disclosing information is available to a public audience.

Meanwhile, it is also suggested that judgments and evaluations of self-disclosers vary according to individual characteristics of the person who makes the evaluations (Kleinke 1979). Previous researchers have suggested that these individual characteristics can be defined in terms of the evaluator's personality and the evaluator's self-disclosure level (Chelune 1977; Chaikin et al., 1975; Taylor and Overlander 1969). For some people, the self-disclosing message is interpreted merely as a marketing message. Consumers are not likely to respond to a marketing message in the desired manner if they are skeptical (Beltramini 1982). Based on this speculation, this dissertation study proposes that an individual's skepticism toward advertising to be a moderating variable to influence the relationship between consumers and the brand and consequent relational outcomes. Specifically, adopting Obermiller and Spangenberg's (1998) concept of advertising skepticism, the individual's general tendency toward disbelief of brand's self-

disclosing message is expected to be a critical determinant in consumers' brand evaluations.

Before the emergence of social media, the disclosure of personal and intimate backstage information, such as behind-the-scenes content, "making of" videos, employee stories, and inside stories that were not directly related to a firm's commercial activities, was difficult to distribute via traditional media channels. However, with the availability of various social media platforms, marketers can now easily produce and deliver personal and intimate stories about the brands.

Despite the increase and popularity of social media, marketers are still unclear about how to effectively integrate social media into their advertising strategy (Kuhn and Burns 2008; Verna 2007). Existing studies in this area typically investigate from the viewpoint of consumers, focusing on user-generated contents (e.g., Cheong and Morrison 2008; Daugherty et al. 2008) and eWOM (e.g., Lee and Youn 2009; Sohn 2009). At present, only a few studies have looked at the utilization of social media from a brand's perspective (e.g., Ahuja and Medury 2010; Cho and Huh 2010)

These days, consumers are able to watch what a brand does, listen to what a brand says, and expect to make a meaningful connection with a brand via social media. Thus, creating effective and persuasive content on behalf of a brand to attract consumers via social media becomes an important task for today's marketers. In this dissertation, brand information disclosure is defined as any communication of a brand's relevant information, thoughts, and feelings, which are generated and disclosed by marketers. Further, disclosing perceived backstage of a brand by showing various behind-the-scenes information is proposed as a unique type of brand information disclosure, which is interpreted as a more intimate disclosure of a brand than front-stage only information.

Motivated by the integral role of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships, this dissertation study is based on four key premises. First, a consumer and a brand can form a relationship, which resembles interpersonal relationships. Second, given the first premise, disclosing information about a brand can be understood as a type of brand information disclosure. Third, literature on self-disclosure in a human relationship context can help us understand consumer-brand relationships. Fourth, when a brand discloses itself to consumers in terms of depth (i.e., front- and perceived back-stage) in an exclusive manner (i.e., scarcity of information), consumers are likely to use them accordingly in evaluating the brand.

The focus of this dissertation study is to investigate the influence of a brand's disclosure of perceived backstage information through social media on brand evaluation. More specifically, this research is aimed at answering the following three research questions:

- RQ1: How does the degree of brand information disclosure (i.e., perceived backstage visibility) via social media influence consumer responses toward a brand?
- RQ2: How does the scarcity of brand information disclosure via social media influence consumer responses toward a brand?
- RQ3: Would the consumer's general advertising skepticism moderate the impact of disclosure of brand's behind-the-scene?

This research hopes to contribute to the theoretical understanding of self-disclosure in the consumer-brand context. More specifically, the present research will be an exploratory attempt at investigating the impact of disclosing the perceived backstage of a brand as a marketing communication strategy. The results of the current study will

advance our understanding of how consumers interpret different types of messages provided by marketers via social media and use them in evaluating brands. In addition, the findings of this research will contribute to our understanding of a brand's perceived backstage information and suggest practical guidelines for its strategic use in social media.

Perceived backstage and frontstage dimensions of a firm have been conceptualized in the service management area, but they have not been adopted in the general marketing context. By empirically testing this new concept, the results of this study will show that a brand's perceived backstage indeed impacts consumers' evaluation of a brand. Further, the proposed relational outcome of brand information disclosure (i.e., intimacy, liking, and trust), scarcity effects of self-disclosure, and the moderating effect of consumer skepticism will contribute to the existing consumer behavior literature.

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter 2 contains literature review and describes key theoretical constructs. Chapter 3 offers hypotheses and research questions of this dissertation study. Chapter 4 provides research methodology with a description of the procedure. Chapter 5 presents the results of the empirical investigation. Finally, a discussion of the implications of the study and directions for future research are offered in chapter 6.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Marketers who want to go beyond consumer's satisfaction with their brands are attempting to build and maintain a long-term relationship with their current and future consumers (Hess and Story, 2005). A positive brand relationship generates consumers' strong emotional attachment to the brand, which leads to a higher likelihood of repurchasing the brand in order to maintain and nurture a good relationship (Fournier, 1998). The consumer-brand relationship paradigm (e.g., Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Fournier, 1998) has been discussed for the past two decades to meet marketers' needs. Inspired by the metaphor of interpersonal relationships, the consumer-brand relationship paradigm suggests that there are human relationship qualities between consumer and brand (Fournier, 1998). In her inspiring exploratory study, Fournier (1998) argues that brands are active relationship partners with consumers, providing a framework for characterizing and understanding consumer-brand relationships. Three case studies were conducted to understand consumers' lived experiences with brands. In essence, she proposes that consumers are not just buying brands because they like them or because they work well. Rather, consumers are involved in relationships with a collective of brands so as to benefit from the meanings brands add to their lives (Fournier, 1998). Fournier further suggests that some consumers form very intimate bonds with brands such as feelings of love and attachment, which are usually experienced with close friends, family, or romantic partners.

Then, why do consumers form relationships with brands? The fundamental rationale for the consumer-brand relationship can be found in personality research and social psychology literatures. Relationships are a sequence of interactions between parties where the future interactions between them are significantly different from that of

strangers (Hinde 1976). Thus, when consumers have opportunities to interact with a brand constantly, the interaction between the consumer and the brand could also be characterized as relational (Aggarwal 2004). In addition to this interaction between consumer and product, when consumers have an opportunity to interact with the representatives of a brand in either offline or online environments, it also leads them to form a social relationship with the brand. This kind of interaction between consumer and the brand representatives is best seen by service brands such as hotels and airlines and brands, which are a combination of products and services (Aggarwal 2004).

Another rationale for the consumer-brand relationship can be found in animism, which has been defined as “the erroneous belief that inanimate objects are alive” (McDonald and Stuart-Hamilton 2000, p. 231). That is, some consumers think of the brand as having a soul or, at least, more human-like properties (Aggarwal 2004). According to Freud, animism is the first complete theory of the universe (Freud 1989). Similarly, anthropomorphization, the personification of inanimate objects (Brown 1991), can also explain some consumers’ behavior in naming their beloved products such as cars.

For example, when the gas gauge of a car teeters on empty, it is not uncommon to say, “If we can just make it a few more blocks, there is a gas station around the corner” (Hass 2007, p.8). This “conversation” between the car and the driver most likely occurs because successful relationships with objects usually require that the object be considered a person (Redfearn 1982). For another example, in his article “When are Things Persons and Persons are Things?”, Redfearn (1982) describes a “good craftsman” as one who knows his tools and his materials intimately. He talks to the tools and lets the object talk back to him in a real dialogue (Redfearn 1982). Redfearn (1982) suggests that this behavior of treating objects as if they were human is natural. Most people, at some point,

have enlivened objects with “warmth, life, and feeling” or projected these characteristics into inanimate things (Redfearn 1982). This behavior may even be taught in early childhood. For instance, when a child is damaging a table, then the mother might say, “Poor table, don’t hurt it,” and the child will learn a more considerate way of behaving toward the object (Redfearn 1982).

In highlighting the existence of consumer-brand relationships, Aggarwal (2004) describes brand zealots. Brand zealots are those consumers who experience an extraordinary brand relationship and go well beyond the fulfillment of a simple utilitarian need. Aggarwal (2004) provides some examples such as a computer user who had the Apple logo of Macintosh tattooed on his chest and a driver of a Volkswagen Beetle who treats his car like a beautiful woman.

The consumer-brand relationship is also evidenced by the emergence of a brand community defined as “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, [and it is] based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001, p. 412). When the sentence “I love Target” or “I love Starbucks” were typed into Google, innumerable websites where consumers share their intimate experiences with brands appeared - 17,200 items for Starbucks and 13,200 for Target (Arruda 2005).

All of the aforementioned rationales and examples are consistent with Fournier’s (1998) consumer-brand relationship paradigm. Previous studies which employed a consumer-brand relationship framework supported this idea in that relationships do indeed exist between consumers and brands (e.g., Kim and Kwon 2011; Thorbjornsen et al. 2002).

For example, Kim and Kwon (2011) examined college students’ relationships with retail brands based on three interpersonal relational metaphors (i.e., soulmates, best

friends, and casual buddies). Participants were asked to think of retailer brands as “people” with actual thoughts, feelings and actions. Then, they were asked to write about their relationship with a specific retailer brand. The results of their content analysis found that even though subjects’ relationship with retailer brands is not equally rich and deep as their relationships with human partners, they behave toward retailer brands as if they have a relationship with them. Specifically, in a casual buddy relationship, the findings of their study suggest that college students tend to be “satisfied yet promiscuous customers” (Kim and Kwon 2011, p. 79). In this case, the consumers explicitly acknowledged that they would switch to a different brand if they experienced disappointment or if the benefit offered by the brand was readily available from other competitors. On the contrary, college students who identify their favorite apparel brand (e.g., Forever 21, Buckle, and Urban Outfitters) as their soulmate, reported their exclusive loyalty to that brand. It is revealed that having stronger brand relationships with high levels of loyalty involve strong emotional attraction (Kim and Kwon 2011). For example, the soulmate brand relationship was characterized as a highly emotional and personal bond between relationship partners. The study demonstrates the adoption of interpersonal relationship metaphors for considering differences in college student’s relationship with brands in the retail context.

Consumer-brand relationships are also observed in the online environment. Thorbjornsen et al. (2002) tested the Internet as a tool to build consumer-brand relationships. Two of the most common applications – personalized web sites and customer communities – were compared for their ability to develop consumer-brand relationships. Personalized web sites were considered to be machine-to-human interactive communication tools whereas customer communities were considered to be a human-to-human interactive communication tools. The consumer-brand relationship was measured

for two fictitious brands of two different products (airline ticket and restaurant meal). Significant main effects of Internet applications were found when Internet experience was analyzed as a moderator. That is, personalized websites generated stronger consumer-brand relationships for subjects with extensive Internet experience than those subjects with limited Internet experience. Conversely, customer communities developed stronger relationships for participants who have limited Internet experience than those with higher Internet experience. Thorbjornsen et al. (2002) concluded that the Internet is a promising tool for building consumer-brand relationships although consumer factors such as an individual's Internet experience may moderate its impact.

As such, consumer-brand relationship researchers have suggested that relationships between brands and consumers exist in both offline and online contexts. However, the idea that consumers form relationships with brands is not without controversy. Researchers suggest that the consumer-brand relationship is not identical to interpersonal relationships in all aspects. Firstly, relationships with brands almost always involve some degree of monetary exchange (Aggarwal 2004). Secondly, the relationship with the brand is a mix of personal and impersonal. That is, it is more similar to a celebrity-fan relationship than a relationship between two people who know each other (Aggarwal 2004). Thirdly, some interpersonal relationships such as romantic relationships need exclusivity whereas consumers can have relationships with multiple brands simultaneously (Sung and Choi 2010). Given such differences, it is suggested that researchers should not overextend the relationship metaphor (Aggarwal 2004). However, it is reasonable to believe that even though consumers' relationships with brands do not necessarily share the same richness and depth as interpersonal relationships, consumers sometimes act like they have a relationship with brands (Aggarwal 2004).

SELF-DISCLOSURE

Given that consumer-brand relationship shares similar characteristics with interpersonal relationship, previous findings on interpersonal relationship can provide further insights in investigating the relationship between a consumer and a brand. One way that a company may enhance its relationship with consumers is to disclose information about the company (Chou, Teng, and Lo 2009).

The Concept of Self-Disclosure

To disclose means to show, to make known, or to reveal. Derelega and Grzelak (1979) defined self-disclosure as “any information exchange that refers to the self, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future” (p. 152). According to Jourard (1971, p.19), self-disclosure is “the act of making yourself manifest, showing yourself so others can perceive you.”

Whenever people encounter other people face-to-face, it is natural that they automatically disclose various aspects of themselves. Merely standing before another person reveals a person’s sex, approximate age, weight, and height, and, to the perceptive observer, possibly even some of the person’s current affective qualities such as happiness or sadness. In addition to mere encounters, when a person begins to interact with another person, he or she discloses further information through his or her body movements, eye contact, proximity, and, most importantly, how he or she speaks and what he or she says (Rosenfeld and Civikly 1976). The latter class of behaviors, namely verbal disclosures, has become synonymous with the term “self-disclosure” in psychology and communication literature (Chelune 1979).

By limiting the scope of empirical inquiry of self-revelations to only those disclosures that are communicated to interactants, researchers have taken the first step in conceptualizing self-disclosure (Chelune 1979). In this notion, Cozby (1973, p. 73)

defined self-disclosure as “any information about himself which Person A communicates verbally to Person B.” According to this definition, self-disclosure must meet the following three operational criteria: (1) it must contain personal information about Person A; (2) Person A must verbally communicate this information; and (3) Person A must communicate this information to a target Person B.

In summary, self-disclosure refers to intentional communication behavior of any self-relevant information to a communication partner. Given this definition, brand information disclosure can be understood to be any brand-relevant information, which is deliberately disclosed by marketers. In this notion, previous marketing communication including advertising and public relations efforts can be broadly interpreted as brand’s self-disclosing actions. Then, what is the role of this self-disclosure in a relationship? The following section reviews how self-disclosure works in human relationship.

Self-Disclosure in Human Relationship

An individual’s self-disclosure constitutes an integral part of an interpersonal relationship. In particular, self-disclosure is one of the defining characteristics of intimate relationships (Brehm et al 2002). As stated by Brehm and his colleagues (2002, p. 138), “two people cannot be said to be intimate with each other if they do not share some personal, relatively confidential information with one another.” Of all the processes that have been theorized to be essential to relationship development, nothing has been considered more important than the interactants’ self-disclosure (Harvey and Omarzu 1997).

In every sort of interpersonal relationship, from business partnerships to love affairs, the exchange of self-disclosure plays an important role (Rubin 1973). Derelega, Walmer, and Furman (1993) suggested that self-disclosure and personal relationships are

“mutually transformative”, which means that self-disclosure changes the direction, definition, and intensity of relationships.

Social penetration theory further supports the notion that communication of self-relevant information plays a central role in the initiation, development, maintenance, and termination of relationships. Altman and Taylor (1973) proposed that a relationship progresses toward greater closeness and commitment as a function of the reciprocal exchange of information.

In the relationship initiation and development stage, self-disclosure, such as revealing one’s name, hometown, hobbies, and so on, promotes liking and helps people get to know one another. Even though this type of self-disclosure may not be intimate, it is the prelude to more intimate self-disclosure. In this phase, self-disclosure provides information that helps people reduce uncertainty about the other persons’ attitudes, values, personality, and so on, thereby enabling the relationship to develop (Berger and Bradac 1982).

Derelega et al. (1993, p.2) identified the process of self-disclosure as follows: “If you like this person, you will want to know more about him or her, and you will, in turn, be willing to share more information about yourself. You will begin to talk about attitudes, feelings, and personal experiences; in brief, you will begin to disclose information that is more personal. If your new friend likes you, he or she also will disclose personal information.”

In the relational maintenance phase, once partners feel they know each other, the exchange of objective or factual information about the self probably decreases (Fitzpatrick 1987). Instead, as a relationship progresses, the amount of subjective or emotional information exchanged between partners increases and may become a major part of the relationship (Fitzpatrick 1987).

Similarly, according to social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor 1973), if the initial interaction is rewarding, and if each partner expects that future interactions will continue to be rewarding, the partners will continue to interact and will increase the depth of their self-disclosures by revealing increasingly intimate, emotional, and detailed personal information about themselves. The partners' self-disclosures are theorized to also increase in breadth by providing information along a greater variety of dimensions (Altman and Taylor 1973).

In summary, previous scholars have suggested that self-disclosure plays a key role in initiating, developing, and maintaining human relationship (e.g., Tardy and Dindia 2006). In addition, from business partnerships to love affairs, self-disclosure influences various types of interpersonal relationship. However, when people disclose information about themselves, the content and the degree of self-disclosure vary. The next section provides a review of this multidimensional facet of self-disclosure.

The Dimensions of Self-Disclosure

The content of self-disclosure is multi-dimensional. For example, self-disclosure messages can be descriptive self-disclosure – that is, information and fact about oneself that might be more or less personal, such as “my drinking habits,” “Details about my sex life,” or “I have four brothers and sisters.” On the contrary, self-disclosure messages can be evaluative – that is, expressions of personal feelings, opinions, and judgments, such as “I am embarrassed to tell you what I feel,” “I love you,” or “I hate broccoli” (Morton 1978). As such, any communication can vary in the degree of self-disclosure (Collins and Miller 1994). Since the content of self-relevant information varies, self-disclosure has been suggested to be a multidimensional construct (Altman and Taylor 1973; Journauld 1971; Pearce and Sharp 1973; Wheelless 1976).

Previous researchers have proposed the various dimensions of self-disclosure. Chelune (1975; 1978) proposed that self-disclosure is thought to include, at a minimum, five basic parameters including (1) amount or breadth of personal information disclosed, (2) intimacy of the information revealed, (3) duration or rate of disclosure, (4) affective manner of presentation, and (5) self-disclosure flexibility (Chelune, 1975; 1978). Wheelless (1976) developed a 31-item Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (RSDS) to study self-disclosure as a multi-dimensional construct. The five dimensions include (1) intent to disclose, (2) amount of disclosure, (3) positive-negative nature of disclosure, (4) honesty/accuracy of disclosure, and (5) depth or intimacy. Cozby (1973) proposed that the basic parameters of self-disclosure are (a) breadth or amount of information disclosed, (b) depth or intimacy of information disclosed, and (c) duration or time spent describing each item of information. Others, such as Jourard (1971) suggested additional dimensions related to honesty of disclosure. Pearce and Sharp (1973) also proposed that both willingness to disclose and honesty (i.e., authenticity) can be considered as dimensions of disclosure.

Perhaps the most widely applied multi-dimensional concept of self-disclosure is the one proposed by Altman and Taylor (1973). As a part of their presentation of Social Penetration Theory (SPT), Altman and Taylor (1973) proposed that there are three dimensions of self-disclosure - breadth, depth, and duration. First, they defined breadth as the amount of information exchanged or number of self-relevant statements made by the discloser, that is, the range of topics that are disclosed in an interaction. More specifically, the number of different categories that a self-disclosure contains is the “breadth category” measure of self-disclosure. This is different from “breadth frequency,” which is the measure of all different items within one breadth category. Second, depth of self-disclosure refers to the level of intimacy exchanged. It reflects the

degree to which particular topics are exposed and deemed personal or to which revealed information is deemed closer to the true self. Lastly, duration is the length of time self-disclosure occurs within an interaction.

Among those three dimensions, the most widely accepted dimensions by previous self-disclosure studies are breadth and depth of self-disclosure. Disclosure breadth is typically operationalized as the amount or the number of self-relevant statements during an interaction. Disclosure depth is typically operationalized as topic intimacy. That is, intimate topics (e.g., one's feelings about marriage) are considered higher levels of disclosure than are less intimate topics (e.g., one's favorite musical group). In particular, Altman and Taylor (1973) further distinguished three layers, peripheral, intermediate, and core, of depth dimension of self-disclosure. At the peripheral layers, individuals disclose biographical characteristics, such as gender, age, and personal history. In the intermediate layer, individuals disclose primarily attitudes, opinions, and values. At the core layer, individuals reveal private personal beliefs, needs, and fears, which are considered most private.

In summary, the previous self-disclosure literatures suggest that the degree of self-disclosure is different depending upon breadth and depth of the individual's self-disclosure. Then, how do various degrees of self-disclosure generate different outcomes? The following section presents the different outcomes of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships.

The Consequences of Self-Disclosure

Intimacy

Intimacy is defined as a feeling of closeness that develops from personal disclosure between people (Perlman and Fehr 1987). Intimacy develops primarily

through self-disclosure (e.g., Derlega et al., 1993; Jourard 1971; Perlman and Fehr 1987). Especially, the disclosures of personally relevant information, thoughts, and feelings to another person generate intimacy in a relationship (Sternberg 1988). Most previous studies on interpersonal relationships agree that intimacy is an essential aspect of various kinds of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Bartholomew 1990; Clark and Reis 1988; Sullivan 1953). The positive link between self-disclosure and intimacy is due to the notion that self-disclosures carry certain relational values that express intimacy and solicit reciprocation (Jiang, Bazarova, and Hancock 2010). That is, when people consider self-disclosure valuable, self-disclosure often facilitates understanding and invites reciprocity between communicators (Altman and Taylor 1973). Because of this reciprocity, self-disclosure often increases from exchanging non-intimate content (e.g., name, job, hometown, etc.) to highly intimate topics (e.g., romantic relationships, sexual orientations, etc.)

Previous studies reported that particular types of self-disclosure are closely linked to the experience of intimacy. According to Reis and Shaver (1988), intimacy results from a process that is initiated when the speaker communicates personally relevant and revealing information to the listener. Social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor 1973) also proposes that intimacy and self-disclosure are two key concepts in relationship development.

In their investigation of the causal link between self-disclosures and relationship intimacy in computer-mediated-communication (CMC) and face-to-face (FtF) situation, Jiang and colleagues (2010) found that equivalently intimate disclosure produce greater intimacy both in CMC and FtF conditions. Interestingly, they reported that subjects in a CMC condition felt greater intimacy than subjects in a FtF condition.

In addition to the intimacy toward the discloser, self-disclosure is known to enhance the liking toward the discloser. The following section reviews the available literature on existing self-disclosure-liking link.

Liking

Do we like others who disclose to us? Collins and Miller (1994) suggested that there are at least three kinds of disclosure-liking relationships: (a) Do people like others who disclose to them more than others who do not? (b) Do individuals disclose more to people whom they initially like? (c) Do individuals like others as a result of having disclosed to them?

Among these three types, the relationship between a person's level of disclosure and a recipient's liking for the discloser has been investigated by numerous social psychologists, making up the largest portion of self-disclosure literature (e.g., Chaikin and Derlega 1974; Chelune 1976; Cozby 1972; Jourard 1959; Petty and Mirrels 1981).

There are two models to explain the disclosure-liking effect. The most extensive theoretical model is proposed by Altman and Taylor (1973). They assert that self-disclosure is a critical component in the formation of relationships. Their social penetration theory suggests that relationships develop through gradual increases in the depth and breadth of self-disclosure. In their model, the degree of self-disclosure between partners may be viewed as a barometer of developing closeness (Taylor 1979). According to them, disclosure is considered a rewarding or positive outcome for a partner because it communicates the discloser's liking and desire to initiate a more intimate relationship.

The second theoretical model stems from information-processing models or attraction, which suggests that liking is determined by having positive beliefs about an interaction partner. Thus, the more favorable the beliefs are, the greater the attraction is (Ajzen 1977; Dalto, Ajzen, and Kaplan 1979). The basic principle of the information

processing approaches describes the link between self-disclosure and liking as follows: The attraction of one person (P) toward another person (O) is determined by P's information about O. If the information is generally favorable, P will be attracted to O; if the information is unfavorable, P's evaluation of O will be negative. Importantly, according to information processing approach, the only direct and immediate determinant of attraction is the information that is available to P (Ajzen 1977). Further, any other factor can influence attraction only if it has an effect on this information (Ajzen 1977)

In addition, the information processing approach suggests that the link between self-disclosure and liking is mediated by the formation of positive beliefs about the discloser. Ajzen (1977) proposes that people who disclose more intimately may be viewed by others as more trusting, friendly, and warm. In the same vein, people form more positive impressions of others who are willing to share personal information about themselves, compared with others who are less open (e.g., Davis and Sloan 1974; Jones and Archer 1976; Kleinke and Kahn 1980). For example, Worthy, Gary and Kahn (1969) made female subjects exchange written information about each other in response to questions that had previously been scaled for intimacy. A direct measure of liking showed that attraction increased significantly with more intimacy of self-disclosure. Similar evidence can be found in Dalto, Ajzen, and Kaplan (1975)'s experiment. The study's main purpose was to examine the extent to which attraction is affected by the intimacy of self-disclosed information, independent of the information's desirability (i.e., positive vs. negative). The results of this study suggest that a person who discloses intimate, negative information about herself is viewed as honest, sincere, and open thereby increasing her attractiveness in comparison to a person who discloses superficial, negative information.

In summary, the findings of previous studies suggest that we like others who disclose to us more intimately. In addition to this disclosure-liking effect, self-disclosure is positively associated with trust in a relationship.

Trust

Another relational outcome of self-disclosure is trust. Trust is “a psychological state comprising of the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations from the intentions or behaviors of another” (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395). Trust is an important component of close relationships (Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna 1985). Previous studies in interpersonal relationships found that a significant correlation between trust measures the breadth and depth of self-disclosure (Pederson and Higbee 1969; Wheelless and Grotz 1977). Jourard and Friedman (1970) reported that the counselor who discloses more to a client is rated as more trustworthy, in general, than the counselor who does not self-disclose. In a similar context, Curtis (1982) confirmed that the subject’s trust toward the therapist were also enhanced as the therapist’ increased use of self-disclosure.

In the online context, Mazera, Murphy, and Simonds (2009) explored the impact of teacher self-disclosure via *Facebook* on students’ perceptions of teacher credibility. The findings suggest that teachers who exhibit high levels of self-disclosure on a *Facebook* wall appear more credible than teachers who have low computer-mediated self-disclosure. In the online marketing context, Forman and Whitworth (2005) indicate that company identity information provides greater understanding of a company, which should increase consumer trust. When consumers first visit a website, they form trust based on the cues they receive (Wang et al. 2004). Thus, when consumers browse a company’s website, company identification information offers an important cue to help consumers identify a company’s “real” existence, which generates greater trust (Chou,

Teng, and Lo 2009). Chou, Teng, and Lo (2009) conducted an experimental study to examine the role of company information disclosure on the website. The study confirms that when the company website discloses more information about the company, consumers trust the company more.

In summary, this section reviews the impact of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships. Intimacy and liking are the most observed outcomes of self-revealing behavior. In addition, trust is also a relational outcome of self-disclosure. Most importantly, relational outcomes of self-disclosure vary depending upon the degree of self-disclosure. Moreover, there are various situational and contextual influencers that impact the outcomes of self-disclosure. For example, Collins and Miller (1994) proposed various variables to influence the impact of self-disclosure: (a) whether disclosure is appropriate in the particular context, (b) whether a partner is perceived to be responding personally, (c) the quality and quantity of the information disclosed, (d) the content of the information disclosed, (e) the sex of the discloser and recipient, and (f) whether the recipient generally has positive beliefs about individuals who disclose. Among various influencers, the scarcity of self-disclosure and individual characteristics have received extensive research attention. Following are the review of the factors, which influence relational outcomes of self-disclosure.

Factors Influencing Self-Disclosure

Scarcity of Self-Disclosure

People try to interpret a speaker's various reasons and goals for sharing intimate information (Derlega and Berg 1987). In such situations, attributions for self-disclosure become part of the meaning that the receiver assigns to the sender's message (Jiang, Bazarova, and Hancock 2010). Previous studies have suggested that different types of

attributions for self-disclosure have different implications for relational intimacy (e.g., Jones and Archer 1976; Taylor, Gould, and Brounstein 1981). In particular, the scarcity of a self-disclosing message, which is interchangeably used with the personal-ness of self-disclosure, are a critical attribution to influence on the impact of self-disclosure (e.g., Derelega and Grzelak 1979; Petty and Mirels 1981; Archer and Cook 1986). That is, being selected to be the recipient of a scarce message leads recipients to have positive reactions to the discloser.

Some scholars interpreted this scarcity effect of disclosure in terms of Brock's (1968) commodity theory (e.g., Derelega and Grzelak 1979; Petty and Mirels 1981). From this perspective, disclosure does not necessarily increase attraction. Rather, it increases liking primarily because it implies that the information is rare and, hence, valuable. According to Brock's commodity theory (1968), resources acquire value to the extent that they are perceived to be scarce or unavailable to others. Based on this assumption, Brock (1968, p. 248) derives the prediction that "[a] message will increase in effectiveness as the perceived number of co-recipients, relative to the total number of all present and accounted for co-recipients, declines." Based on this assumption, Derelega and Grzelak (1979) hypothesized that being selected (or not selected) as a disclosure recipient may have more impact when only one person has access to the message than when many persons have access to it. The results of their experiment support their hypothesis that subjects who believed their partners had identified only one person as a disclosure target (that is, the message was a scarce commodity) had more positive feelings about their partners when they had been chosen rather than not chosen to be the recipient.

Similarly, Petty and Mirels (1981) assert that the relationship between intimacy of disclosure and attraction depend on the perceived scarcity of the revealed information.

That is, intimacy of disclosure generates greater outcomes when it is more rarely discussed and less available. In their experiment, Petty and Mirels (1981) revealed that information scarcity influences the relationship between the extent of self-disclosure and liking for the self-disclosing person. That is, no information was provided about scarcity of the disclosures, increasing intimacy led to liking for the disclosing partner. On the contrary, when the level of disclosure scarcity was held constant, the effect of intimacy on liking was attenuated and non-significant.

In the same vein, Archer and Cook (1986) proposed that intimate self-disclosure increases the partner's attraction to the discloser when the self-disclosure is perceived to be personal. In their experiment, subjects perceived greater liking for the partner when their interaction partner's intimate disclosure was unavailable elsewhere than when it was available from another source. Based on this finding, they concluded that self-information's scarcity is a crucial determinant of intimacy's effects on attraction.

In addition, Kleinke (1979) also suggests that, in general, people evaluate the discloser more favorably if they appear to be selective. That is, the relation between self-disclosure and liking is increased when a recipient makes a personalistic attribution for the discloser. So when people perceive that they have been personally selected for intimate disclosure, they feel trusted and liked and are more apt to evaluate the discloser favorably (Wortman et al., 1976). Evidence that people like a disclosing person when they feel specifically chosen for the disclosure has been further supported by other research (Certner 1973; Worthy, Gary and Kahn 1969).

In summary, the findings of previous studies suggest that attributions for the disclosure affect the outcomes of self-disclosure. Specifically, the scarcity of self-disclosure, which can be interpreted as the exclusivity or the personalness of the self-relevant information, clearly impacts the relational outcomes of self-disclosure. In

addition to this attribution for the disclosure, individual characteristics are also suggested to be a potential variable, which may affect the impact of self-disclosure.

Individual Characteristics

Judgments and evaluations of self-disclosers vary according to individual characteristics of the person who makes the evaluations (Kleinke 1979). Previous researchers have suggested that these individual characteristics can be defined in terms of the evaluator's personality and the evaluator's self-disclosure level (Chelune 1977; Chaikin et al., 1975; Taylor and Overlander 1969).

For example, Chelune's (1977) proposes that the evaluator's personality will impact the evaluations of the self-discloser. In his study, high self-disclosure flexibility is characterized by the use of different levels of self-disclosure in different situations. Low self-disclosure flexibility refers to self-disclosure at a constant level regardless of the situation. Chelune (1977) suggested that the subjects with high self-disclosure flexibility evaluated a person who gave high self-disclosure to a stranger as less emotionally stable than a person who gave medium self-disclosure to a stranger. In addition, by using Maudsley Personality Inventory (Eysenck 1962), Chaikin et al. (1975) reported that there are individual differences based on "neurotic" scores in reactions to self-disclosure. That is, regardless of the level of self-disclosure made by the discloser, people with "neurotic" scores gave average levels of reciprocal self-disclosure.

For another example, the evaluator's self-disclosure level may have impact on the evaluations of the self-discloser. Taylor and Oberlander (1969) suggest that high-self-disclosers are more sensitive to person-oriented stimuli than low self-disclosers. Therefore, it is possible that high and low self-disclosers may evaluate self-disclosure from others differently (Kleinke 1979). Some empirical evidence has been reported by

Daher and Banikiotes (1976). That is, highly disclosing males are more favorable when they evaluate other males who give high rather than low self-disclosure.

In summary, attribution for self-disclosure such as scarcity and individual characteristics including personality and self-disclosure tendency are factors, which influence the outcomes of self-disclosure. The next section reviews how these self-disclosure behaviors extend to online environments, particularly in the uses of social media applications.

SELF-DISCLOSURE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Like in face-to-face interpersonal relationships, self-disclosure plays a key role in developing and maintaining a relationship in the online environment. McKenna and Bargh (1999) proposed a conceptual framework for Internet social interaction, suggesting that self-disclosure is one of the most common activities in online social interaction. They assert that Internet users self-disclose to gain intimacy in their online social interaction. Further, it is reported that people are more likely to disclose emotional and personally intimate rather than factual information to their Internet friends (Parks and Floyd 1995).

Online self-disclosure has also been investigated across major social media contexts, such as blogs (e.g., Kleman 2007) and social network sites (e.g., Mazer et al. 2007). For example, in a content analysis of A-list blogs, it was found that over 80% of bloggers disclose details about their day, almost 80% discussed thoughts and feelings, over 45% discussed politics, and over 40% discussed friends and family members (Trammell and Keshelashvili 2005). Consistent findings in blog studies (Bortree 2005; Hevern 2004) indicated that a large amount of intimate information is disclosed via CMC applications. Tidwell and Walther's (2002) experimental study further supported this

finding, suggesting that people who communicate through CMC self-disclosed more compared to those who engage in face-to-face interaction.

For example, a blog is used as a venue for self-disclosure and blogging is used to maintain and strengthen existing relationships. (Bargh, McKenna, and Fitzsimons 2002). Blogs are websites that are frequently updated and organized in reverse chronological order (Herring 2004). Blogs may be written for many reasons (e.g., creative self-expression, social influence). Bloggers regularly share personal information about hobbies, family, and work. In particular, female bloggers are likely to blog about their lives and personal experiences in a diary-style format (Herring et al. 2005). The majority of blogs are written for a personal purpose where bloggers post their life and internal states (Blood 2002). Personal journal blogs are also useful tools for maintaining connections with people and communicating a blogger's identity (Lenhart and Fox 2006; Nardi et al. 2004; Stefanone and Jang 2007). Thus, blogs are often characterized by high amounts of self-disclosure (Bortree 2005; Viegas 2005). Blogging could provide adults with opportunities to develop close friendships since it allows for self-disclosure and communication with others through comments (Bane et al., 2010).

Bane et al. (2010) examined the relationship between bloggers' self-disclosure through their blogs and their perception of the quantity and quality of their online and real-life friendships. In their content analysis, blogs were placed in the low self-disclosure category when the blogger included neither breadth nor depth and described only characteristics and traits, personal history, minor embarrassments, or goals and plans. Blogs were placed in the high self-disclosure category if the blogger discussed either moderately personal topics (e.g., short-term relationship problems, stigmatizing conditions of family members, religious beliefs) with emotional elaboration or highly personal topics (e.g., miscarriage, psychopathology, sexual problems). The results of their

study found that bloggers who disclosed more had more online friends and were more satisfied with their online friendships than were participants who disclosed less (Bane et al 2010).

Hollenbaugh (2010) also explored the impact of self-disclosure in the use of personal blogs. In this study, the researchers measured two dimensions of self-disclosure such as amount and depth and identified the characteristics of bloggers who disclose a large amount of private information. The results of the study suggest that female bloggers who are high in disclosing information and writing blogs for themselves are more likely to disclose private information (Hollenbaugh 2010). Interestingly, the study found that writing for close friends and family was negatively associated with the depth of self-disclosure in blogs (Hollenbaugh 2010).

In summary, previous studies have identified self-disclosure as an important construct of online social interactions and relationships as well. That is, people can feel greater intimacy during online social interactions, allowing them to disclose themselves more emotionally and intimately.

Given the focus of this research on brand information disclosure, the following section reviews the existing literatures on self-disclosure in the marketing context.

SELF-DISCLOSURE IN THE MARKETING CONTEXT

Previous studies have examined extensively the consequences of self-disclosure in the context of interpersonal relationships in either offline or online environments. Based on such studies, marketing scholars have extended the concept of self-disclosure to relationships between corporations and consumers. Recently, a handful of research suggested that self-disclosure could occur in a relationship between a human and a non-

human object. In the marketing context, this relationship can involve a consumer and service provider (Adnrade et al. 2002; Stern 1997; White 2004). With the increasing opportunity for interactions between consumer and brand due to the development of CMC applications, self-disclosure research has started to focus on CMC contexts, suggesting that consumers and brands can engage in self-disclosure.

For example, Im et al. (2008) investigated the consequences of consumer self-disclosure in the online consumer-brand interaction context. They specifically examined how a positive attitude that self-disclosure elicited influences consumers' subsequent behavior toward a brand. In their experiment, they assessed two dimensions of self-disclosure, depth and breadth (Altman and Taylor 1973; Collins and Miller 1994). They referred to depth as the quality of information disclosed and breadth as the quality of information exchanged. Several independent judges who did not know the experimental hypotheses measured the depth of self-disclosure while word count was used to measure the breadth of self-disclosure. Then, they summed up the depth and breadth ratings for self-disclosure to obtain an overall measure of the degree of self-disclosure. The results of the two experiments showed that consumer self-disclosure (e.g., personal information) to a brand website leads to positive evaluations of the advertising on the website. In addition, those consumers who input more information in the brand's website (higher self-disclosure) showed greater brand attitude and purchase intention. Furthermore, they also found that the outcomes of self-disclosure are moderated by product knowledge and mediated by website attitude. Based on the brand relationship theory (Fournier 1998), Im et al. (2008) assert that consumer's self-disclosure has an important role in enhancing consumer attitudes toward the brand.

Similarly, Chou, Teng, and Lo (2009) examined the relationship between company identity information disclosure, trust, and consumer self-disclosure intentions

during the first visit to a company website. Importantly, they investigated the role of mutual self-disclosure in the online B2C context by manipulating the amount of information disclosed by a company. In low company identity information conditions, company websites contained shorter introductions, describing only the establishment date, parent company, main products, and services. In high company identity information conditions, company websites contained longer introductions, describing the establishment date of the parent and branch companies, business philosophy, vision, environmental policy, social responsibility announcements, and recruitment information. The findings of their experiment suggest that when a company website discloses more identity information, consumers tend to trust the company more and exhibit greater intentions to provide their personal information. Importantly, the results of their study suggest that consumer's trust is a mediating factor on the relationship between company's disclosure and consumer's self-disclosure intention.

In summary, previous studies have reported that greater self-disclosure of a company's information generates more positive attitudinal and behavioral responses from consumers. Specifically, company information disclosure is associated with positive brand attitude, purchase intention, and trust. However, a question remains because the findings from previous studies focused only on a company's frontstage information, which is the information that is usually available in public (e.g., establishment date, parent company, main products). In order to better understand backstage information, the following sections discuss relevant literature concerning the backstage of a brand.

PERCEIVED BACKSTAGE OF BRAND

Behind-the-scenes Contents

What is behind-the-scenes? According to Merriam-Webster, the definition of behind-the-scenes is “being or working out of public view or in secret” and “revealing or reporting the hidden workings.” In the film industry, behind-the-scenes content has long been used for promoting products (i.e., films). A making-of, also known as behind-the-scenes, is a documentary film that features the production of a film or television program.

Since the 1950s, Walt Disney has pioneered the use of behind-the-scenes features of new films in order to publicize the studio’s theatrical output. Warner Bros. followed with its own program entitled “Behind the Cameras at Warner Bros.,” which consisted of clips from current releases and appearances by movie stars in exclusive behind-the-scenes production footage. Today, these ‘extras’ serve as contemporary industrial marketing initiatives (Caldwell 2008).

Evans (2010) proposed the term “pseudo backstage” in order to explain the behind-the-scenes contents. According to his argument, pseudo backstage is the artful presentation of information from behind-the-scenes. It is suggested that behind-the-scenes documentaries are pseudo backstage, which is a performance of an idea of the backstage that is designed to interest the audience.

Shaughnessy (2009) suggested that behind-the-scenes theater tours provide the participants the privilege to access the reality of the organization and a tourist experience. He further argues that the divisions between the public and private areas of an institution or organization are renegotiated through behind-the-scenes experiences. Similarly, Evans (2010) suggests that getting to go behind the scenes of a movie may be akin to obtaining

a backstage pass at a rock concert in the sense of privilege and admission to a more exclusive club that it affords.

In the same vein, Lutters and Ackerman (2003) contended that a brand's online community provides the place where consumers access backstage information of the brand. They found that a brand's online community is presented to consumers as a place for people who want to be 'backstage' with football-players, movie stars, or opera-singers. Specifically, The Castle, Disney's online community, was the place to be for Disneyland enthusiasts. Castle presented an opportunity for fans to hang out with insiders in order to gain status by showing off their insider knowledge to fans. They also suggested that such online brand community allows participants to become part of the Disneyland scene, which is a great incentive and attraction for The Castle's participants.

Lutters and Ackerman (2003) also stated that many enthusiasts desire to become part of "the scene" of their brand. In fandom and other social worlds, one may not easily become a creator of the entertainment or art form idealized. However, enthusiasts attempt to gain limited access by hanging out with others more connected to the social world. It is a well-known social phenomenon with many names – for example, opera buffs, stage-door jonnies, fireman wannabes, college football boosters, soccer fans, and even rock groupies – people who hang out at the fringes with a feeling of deep participation (Lutters and Ackerman 2003). Lutters and Ackerman (2003) concluded that online brand communities such as The Castle offer a similar opportunity to Disney enthusiasts. They desire to become part of the Disney spirit and The Castle is a significant attractor for those Disney enthusiasts allowing them to go backstage in order to glimpse performances that the general public is not allowed to view (Lutters and Ackerman 2003).

In summary, previous studies contend that online social media applications such as brand communities are a place where consumers meet and befriend inside people and

gain backstage knowledge. That is, social media of a brand is a place that satisfies brand enthusiasts' desire to become a part of the brand scene by providing privilege to access the reality of the brand. To further conceptualize this behind-the-scenes concept of a brand, the next section provides a review of the dramaturgical theory proposed by Goffman (1959).

Dramaturgical Theory

In social interactions, people often attempt to present themselves according to social expectations and/or in a way that supports a desired impression (Solomon et al. 1985). People also choose not to exhibit private and irrelevant information or information that is difficult to communicate or threatening to the achievement of the goal (Derelega et al. 1993; Gilbert 1976).

In order to describe this social process, Goffman (1922-1982) developed his dramaturgical framework as an analogy to investigate social interactions as if they were part of theatrical performances. According to this theory, people are actors who must convey their personal characteristics and their intentions to others through performance. Most importantly, the theory provides an important distinction between “frontstage” and “backstage” regions. Elaborating on his metaphor of social interaction as a theatrical performance, every performance has a ‘frontstage’ (i.e., the place where the performance happens), and a ‘back region’ or backstage.

By frontstage behaviors, Goffman (1959) referred to self-protective, often manipulative modes of behavior that individuals use when communicating with strangers, socially defined superiors, and others with whom they feel a limited degree of interpersonal trust and intimacy. On the frontstage, actors (people) in their everyday lives manage settings, clothing, words, and nonverbal actions to impress others, called impression management.

Frontstage behavior is manipulative not in a pejorative sense, but rather, in that it is a performance designed to present a particular appearance, typically with the aim of achieving some desired effect (e.g., appeasing a superior, impressing a potential romantic partner, showing off to gain social status, etc.).

Backstage behavior, in contrast, occurs when there is no longer a need to perform, for example, when an individual is alone or finds him or herself in the company of trusted companions. It is here that “the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (Goffman 1959, p. 112). Goffman suggested that it is in the realm of the backstage where the suppressed facts make an appearance.

For example, a restaurant server is likely to act differently in front of customers and in the kitchen. That is, restaurant servers usually behave and talk in quite different manners when they are in the kitchen compared to when they are in the presence of the restaurant’s customers, where good impressions and performance need to be sustained. The managers and employees of a firm have places where they can take a break from engaging in the performance associated with their duties, freely comment on a previous performance, discuss the next performance with other members of their team, and indulge in gossip and small talk.

This metaphor of frontstage and backstage behavior is used to illustrate the complexity and importance of developing trusting relations, and thereby gaining “backstage” access to communities that are generally closed to outsiders (Miller 2004). Goffman (1974) proposed that, “what is important is the sense he provides them through his dealing with them of what sort of person he is behind the role he is in” (p. 298). He further suggested that a person’s identity is not a stable and independent psychological entity; instead, it is constantly readjusted as the person interacts with others.

In summary, the “frontstage” is that which is chosen to be shown as part of the focal interaction and the “backstage” is that which is not. Marketing scholars adopted this dramaturgical metaphor and extended it to consumer-corporate relationship context.

Front and Back Stage in the Marketing Context

In the marketing context, scholars generally defined frontstage and backstage in terms of whether or not customers see a particular area (Grayson 1998; Gummesson 1990). For instance, in a service marketing setting, the dining area of a restaurant is considered frontstage whereas the kitchen is considered backstage. That is, a restaurant’s management is likely to decorate the dining area tastefully and employ customer-oriented employees, which gives the impression of polished, personal service. However, the restaurant’s kitchen area is likely to be hidden because its employees and appearance might give customers an impression of mass-production or messy working conditions (Grove and Fisk 1991, p. 66). Considering another example, MacCannell (1976) suggested that tourism settings often comprise front and back regions, and that many tourists are motivated to access (physically, visually, and/or audibly) the backstage in order to experience the way it really is to obtain an authentic insight.

As illustrated in Figure 2, frontstage refers to anything that falls within the customer’s view while backstage is whatever does not (Gummesson, 1990, p. 44; Lovelock, 1991, pp. 14-15; Shostack, 1981, 1987). For example, hospital operating rooms tend to be kept from customers’ view, and are therefore considered backstage. When managers allow a patient’s family into the operating room – thus revealing what has previously been hidden – they are essentially bringing the backstage into the frontstage, as described by marketing researchers (see, e.g. Grove and Fisk 1989, p. 436; Grove et al. 1992, p. 111). Later, Grayson (1998) argued that there is a third region called “perceived backstage” in addition to backstage and frontstage (see Figure 2.2). Grayson

proposed that customers could gain exposure to this perceived back stage because of three types of experiences: unstaged exposure, staged exposure, and hypothetical exposure (see Table 2.1).

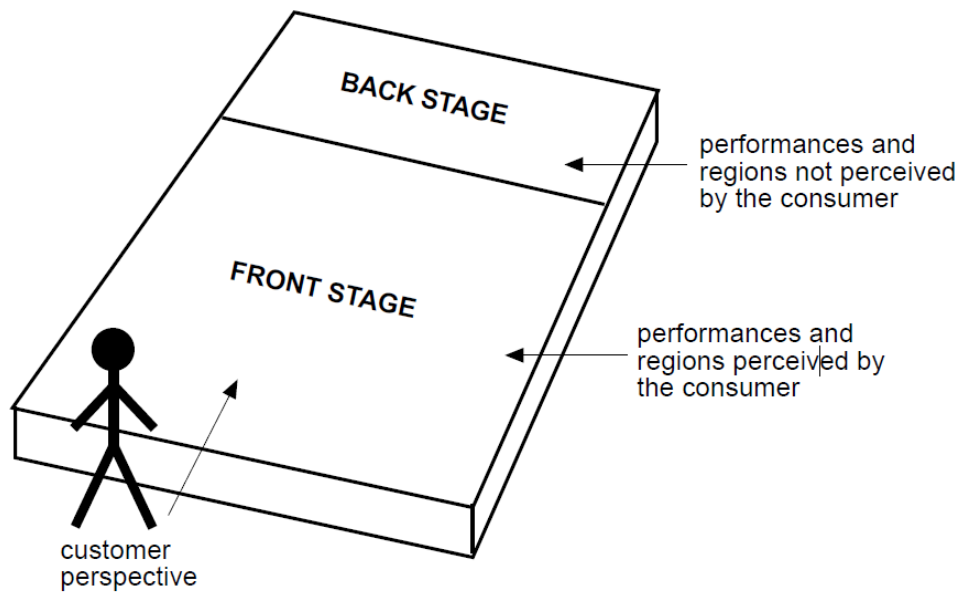


Figure 2.1: Traditional conception of front and back stage in marketing (Source: Grayson 1998, p. 129)

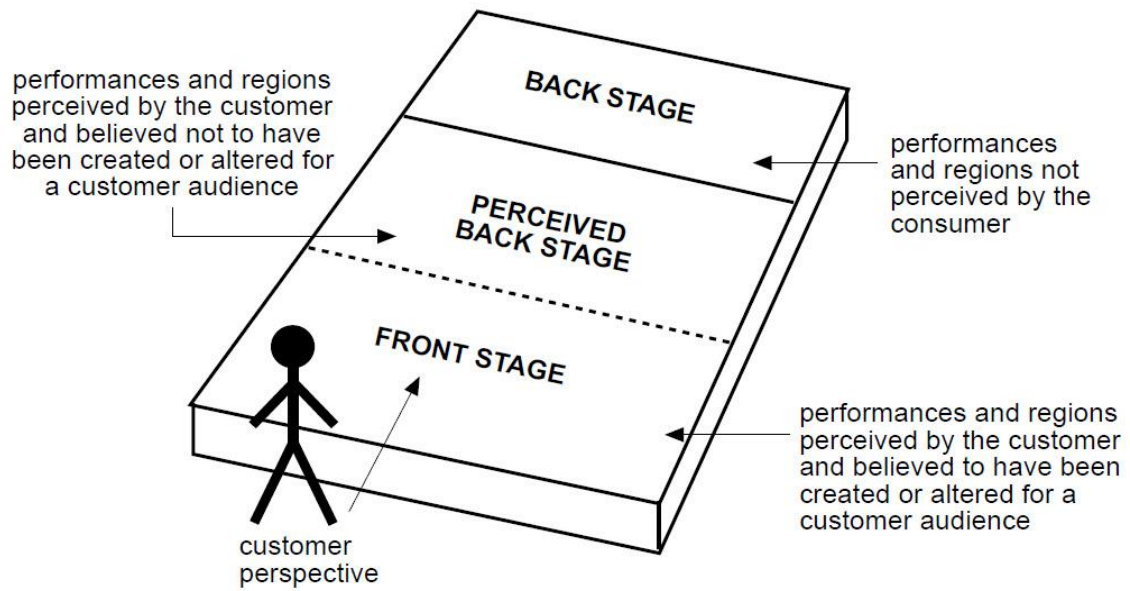


Figure 2.2: Adopted conception of front and back stage in marketing (Source: Grayson 1998, p. 130)

Type of exposure	Perceived by consumer?	Thought by consumer to be backstage?	Thought by marketer to be backstage?	Example: a car repair shop's repair area
None	No	Yes	Yes	A car repair shop keeps customers in the reception area and does not let them see the dirty and disorganized repair area
Unstaged	Yes	Yes	Yes	A customer unexpectedly enters the repair area and sees that it is dirty and disorganized
Staged	Yes	Yes	No	A repair shop has its PR firm create a "behind-the-scenes" promotional video which is played in the reception area and which presents the image of a clean and organized repair area
Hypothetical	Yes	Yes	-	A customer imagines that a car repair shop's repair area is dirty and disorganized

Table 2.1: Comparison and contrast of different types of backstage exposure in marketing context (Source: Grayson 1998, p. 130)

First, Grayson (1998) referred to unstaged exposure as a form of backstage perception that “a customer is exposed to an area or a performance that both the marketer and the customer believe to be back stage” (p. 129). Second, staged exposure occurs when “a customer is exposed to an area or performance designed by the marketer to give the impression of seeing the back stage” (p. 130). MacCannell (1976) referred to this as a “staged back region,” since the marketer considers it to be a frontstage performance, but the consumer actually perceives the same information as the backstage. Lastly, hypothetical exposure would occur if a customer used frontstage to imagine what the back stage might be like. In this case, the customer is not actually exposed to a region of which the marketer is not aware of such exposure.

Although previous studies have focused on the consumer’s backstage exposure in the offline context, this conceptualization lends itself well to the description of online environments. Most branded social media pages offer “staged exposure” experience to their consumers by providing backstage information such as the making of a commercial, behind-the-scenes information about an event, inside story about a product, etc. Thus, in order to conceptualize the brand’s backstage, the current dissertation limits the scope of empirical inquiry of brand’s backstage to only perceived backstage that is accessed by staged exposure.

In addition, to differentiate frontstage and backstage information of a brand, the current dissertation employs the view of Grayson (1998). Frontstage is defined as a “performance and region perceived by the customer and believed to have been created or altered for a customer audience” whereas backstage is referred to as a firm’s “performance and region not perceived by the consumer” (Grayson 1998, p.130).

Importantly, although front and backstage are often physically separated, the distinction between front and backstage is determined socially, not physically

(MacCannell 1976). That is, consumer judgments of the marketer's intention, not physical barriers, create the dividing line between front and backstage. Consumers examine the cues presented by the marketer and make a decision about whether these cues reflect frontstage or backstage information (Grayson and Shulman 2002). Particularly, consumers make a judgment about whether or not the marketer has "performed" a particular "social reality" (Goffman 1959; Schlenker 1980). To elaborate, Grayson and Sulman (2002) suggested that if the consumer believes that the marketer is primarily trying to impress a certain consumer, the marketer has successfully enacted a frontstage performance. On the contrary, if the consumer believes that the marketer is not altering things to create a favorable impression, then the marketer has enacted a backstage performance.

Glinoga and Tombs (2010) examines whether customers care about the backstage component of the physical service environment. The purpose of their study was to explore the customers' perception of the service provider when they do and do not see the backstage component of the physical service environment. In-depth interviews were conducted in a restaurant where the participant could see the backstage of the restaurant in order to capture the customers' perception within a natural setting. The results of their study provided several insights about the impact of the backstage on the customers' perceptions towards the service provider. They suggested that backstage visibility (i.e., showing perceived backstage) provides more confidence, trust, and lower perceived risk to customers. When the backstage was made visible, in other words, when a customer accesses perceived backstage, the customer perceived that the service provider has the confidence to show the customers what they are doing. However, when the backstage is not made visible, the customers' reported that they felt a lack of confidence and trust toward the service provide.

In the same vein, Glinoga and Tombs (2010) explained that increasing backstage visibility encourages the customer to feel lower levels of uncertainty and lower perceived risk. Therefore, backstage visibility (i.e., perceived backstage) increases a sense of predictability, which constitutes a feeling of confidence and a reduction in perceived risk. In addition, they reported that when backstage information is available to customers, it counteracts the impact of the customers' exposure to negative information such as negative media exposure and word-of-mouth.

In summary, previous studies have suggested that there are three types of brand-relevant information- frontstage, backstage, and perceived backstage information. Since backstage information is virtually not available to consumers, perceived backstage is the only concern of the current study. Based on aforementioned literatures, it is highly conceivable that perceived backstage information about a brand such as behind-the-scenes contents can be considered more intimate, personal information of a brand by showing more the private nature of the brand. Thus, providing behind-the-scenes contents is a more intimate brand information disclosure than providing mere frontstage information. Based upon the aforementioned literatures, the next section proposes the following concept of brand information disclosure within a conceptual framework to explore the effect of a brand's self-disclosure.

BRAND INFORMATION DISCLOSURE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Behind-the-scenes information about a brand

Consumers want to see process, and they want to get insider access. As brands increasingly realize that consumers are interested in know about what is going on behind the brand, brands are trying to provide customers behind-the-scenes insights. Behind-the-scenes content takes people inside the brand and gives consumers a sense of the raw happenings inside. With the popularity of various formats of social media platforms, the wealth of DIY media-outlets enables brands to provide behind-the-scenes looks more easily than ever.

Behind-the-scenes contents of a brand can be categorized by three major domains including (1) information about brand promotion, (2) information about product/service production, and (3) information about employees/firms (see the full list in Table 1).

Behind-the-scenes information about brand promotion

Perhaps the most widely available behind-the-scenes contents of a brand are information about brand promotion processes. This includes the making of television advertising, bloopers and deleted scenes of advertising, and interviews with celebrities, models, and producers involved in advertising production. As a sub-text of advertising, this type of behind-the-scenes content commonly provides an up-close and personal look at the making of various formats of advertising campaigns. In the interview with WWD (2010), Prozel Scott, the creative director of fashion brand Ellamoss, claims that behind-the-scenes information about a brand invites consumers to engage in a more personalized experience, while fans can get a complete story of the creative process, production process, and brand message.

Category	Sub-category	Examples
Information about brand promotion process	The Making of advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The behind-the-scenes: The making of Old Spice “Scent Vacation” spot
	Bloopers and deleted scenes of advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bloopers and deleted scenes from Volkswagen's "The Force" commercial
	Interview with celebrities, models, producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check out an exclusive Ashlee Simpson interview and behind the scenes video in AT&T blue room!
	Product photo shoot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peek behind the scenes of our recent Adidas Originals Blue photoshoot to see all the hot new gear coming your way!
	Backstage of fashion show	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Backstage at the Burberry Prorsum Womenswear A/W11 Show
	Behind-the-scenes of brand sponsored events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a behind the scenes look at the 2010 Monster Energy AMA Supercross season opener.
Information about product /service production process	Backstage of service process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go behind the scenes of Jungle Cruise to learn how Disneyland Resort horticulture cast members care for the attraction's plants and trees.
	Backstage of product production process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go Inside Chevy Vehicle Testing with Dept. 180 Meet GM's Crash Test Dummies PlayStation Blog: UNCHARTED 3- A Peek Behind the Digital Curtain The Official Whole Foods Market Blog: True Partnerships with Farmers and Ranchers Behind every cup of coffee is a story. From bean to cup follow the journey your Starbucks coffee travels.
	Factory/Backstage tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BEHIND THE SCENES: Where Scion/Toyota/Lexus cars are born "Backstage Magic" Behind-the-Scenes Tour at Walt Disney World Resort The 2012 VW Passat. Born in Germany Built in America.
Information about employees /firms	Stories about employees who work behind the brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go behind the scenes and meet the Disneyland Resort cast members who keep more than 800 costumes in perfect shape
	Direct communication with insider of the brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gucci's Twitter account Webchat: Meet the Woman Behind the GM Volt

Table 2.2: Categorizations of behind-the-scenes content in brand's social Media

Behind-the-scenes information about product/service production process

Another category of behind-the-scenes content is information which contains the process of product production and service of a brand. By showing the backstage of a brand's service process, product-making process, and a factory/backstage tour, this type of behind-the-scene content allows fans to see the unrevealed aspects of the brand.

The Disney Park Blog is a good example of how a brand takes consumers behind the scenes of the brand's entertainment service. In Disney's "Behind the Scenes" blog postings, consumers can see a wide variety of posts about dance rehearsals, sneak peeks of new construction sites, interviews with employees, how a Disney artist draws Donald Duck, and much more. In an interview with Marshable (2010), Disney Parks' social media director Thomas Smith explained that Disney Parks Blog makes available various behind-the-scenes contents about the brand to share stories with consumers showing the process, dedication, and inspiration that make the park experience more special.

The Ben & Jerry's Blog is another example of how a brand takes consumers behind the scenes of the product production process. In Ben & Jerry's "Inside the Pint" blog postings, consumers get to know how their ice cream is made by watching a backstage tour of the Ben & Jerry's ice cream factory, including an interview with the "flavor guru" who creates and tastes the new flavors of their ice cream. In addition, consumers can get to know how the brand nurtures true partnerships with local farmers and suppliers by reading their behind-the-scenes stories.

	
<p>Interview with the Old Spice guy via Facebook</p>	<p>The making of Victoria's Secret Advertising Campaign via Facebook</p>
	
<p>Bloopers and deleted scenes of Volkswagen TV advertising via YouTube</p>	<p>Creative and production process of Ben and Jerry's advertising campaign</p>

Figure 2.3: Examples of the behind-the-scenes information about brand promotion




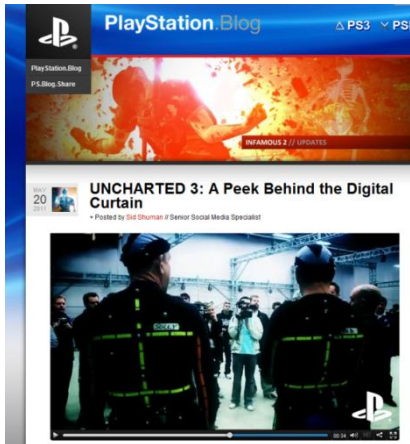
	
<p>Backstage Tours Offer Insider's Look at Disney Parks</p>	<p>Whole foods: True Partnerships with Farmers and Ranchers</p>
	
<p>Go Inside General Motor's Crash Test Lab</p>	<p>PlayStation Blog: UNCHARTED 3- A Peek Behind the Digital Curtain</p>

Figure 2.4: Behind-the-scenes information about product/service production process

Information about employees

Lastly, information and stories about employees of a brand can also be considered as behind-the-scenes content. Stories about employees who work behind the brand are a common type of content in this domain; some brands offer direct communication with insiders to the brand via social media. Consumers often want to peek behind-the-scenes and enjoy access to individuals who work at companies. For example, many fashion brands such as DKNY, Oscar de la Renta, and Gucci offer a direct communication channel with the employee of the brand via Twitter to provide the latest behind-the-scenes scoop. According to Alex Bolen, Chief Executive Officer of Oscar de la Renta, fans can see more a humanized facet of brands by knowing more about what goes on inside their beloved brands, and thus feeling like they are part of the brand's extended family.

	
Gucci's Twitter account	Ben & Jerry's Employee Halloween party

Figure 2.5: Information about employees

Based on aforementioned real-life examples, the following section provides the conceptualization of key constructs on brand information disclosure.

Definitions and Conceptualization

Brand information disclosure

Self-disclosure refers to the verbal communication of personally relevant information, thoughts, and feelings between two entities. Similar to the way we disclose our personal information and stories to our friends via social media, brands also disclose their information and stories to their consumers through social media. In this dissertation, brand information disclosure is defined as any communication of brand-relevant information, thoughts, and feelings, which are generated and deliberately disclosed by marketers. When brand discloses its self-relevant information using social media, it is expected that the degree of disclosure is different depending upon breadth and depth of information disclosed. Thus, based on previous literatures (e.g., Altman and Taylor 1973; Chelune 1975, 1978; Wheelless 1976), brand information disclosure is also proposed in the current dissertation study as a multidimensional construct in terms of breadth and depth of self-disclosure.

Breadth of brand information disclosure

According to social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor 1973), breadth is defined as the amount of information exchanged or number of self-relevant statements made by the discloser, which is measured by either the amount of information or the range of topics. For the purpose of the current investigation, the breadth of brand information disclosure is conceptualized as the topic variety of brand-relevant information provided by marketers through social media platforms.

For example, when brands use social media as a customer relation management (e-CRM) tool, three types of content typologies are identified – organizational, promotional, and relational content (Ahuja and Medury 2010). Table 2.3 provides specific descriptions of social media content typologies. When brands provide a variety

of self-relevant information including organizational, promotional, relational, and general content in their social media website, it is considered to have a higher breadth of brand information disclosure. On the contrary, lower breadth of self-disclosure occurs when brands provide a limited typology of brand-relevant information. Thus, the breadth of brand information disclosure is conceptualized as the topic variety of brand-relevant information in a given brand's social media platform.

Depth of brand information disclosure

The depth of self-disclosure is defined as the level of intimacy exchanged (Altman and Taylor 1973). It is the degree to which particular topics are exposed and deemed personal, or to which revealed information is deemed closer to the true self. The level of topic intimacy is commonly considered to be the same as the degree of depth in self-disclosure. For example, intimate topics (e.g., one's feelings about marriage) are considered to have higher depth of self-disclosure than less intimate topics (e.g., one's favorite musical group). In the present study, based on Goffman's dramaturgical theory (1959) and previous conceptualization in marketing studies (e.g., Grayson 1998), a brand's perceived backstage information, such as behind-the-scenes contents, is considered to send a more intimate message of the brand than its frontstage-only information. Thus, there is a higher degree of a brand information disclosure when a marketer discloses a brand's self-relevant information (frontstage) together with behind-the-scenes contents. The current dissertation study employs Grayson's (1998) conceptualization of "perceived backstage" and defines behind-the-scenes information as the brand-relevant information provided by marketers in order to expose the brand's backstage.

Organizational Content	<i>Posts on</i> Organizational growth Organizational culture CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities Organizational event Projects and research Employee experience Awards
Promotional Content	<i>Posts on</i> Product features Product prices New product Promotional campaigns Product comparisons Product grievances Persuasive to try product Technological issue
Relational Content	<i>Posts on</i> Soliciting feedback Bloggers meet Dealer issues Response to rumors/criticism Controversy/media report Consumer worries Consumer help Celebrations
General Content	<i>Posts on</i> Economic issues New book/movie/music/jokes Environmental issues Political issues

Table 2.3: Corporate blog content categorization (Ahuja and Medury 2010, p. 101)

Scarcity of brand information disclosure

Another dimension, which influences the relational outcome of self-disclosure, is scarcity (i.e., personalness). That is, the impact of self-disclosure on a relationship is different depending on whether an individual is selected or not selected as a disclosure-recipient, or whether the disclosed information is accessible to only limited people or many people. Likewise, in the brand information disclosure context, scarcity of self-disclosing information may also play a significant role in the relationship between consumer and brand. Therefore, in the current dissertation study, the perceived scarcity of information is suggested to be an important dimension of brand information disclosure. Based on the scarcity effects, it is expected that when a brand's self-disclosing message is provided to certain consumers exclusively, the outcome of self-disclosure is greater than when the information is available to everyone.

Advertising Skepticism

As stated in the previous section, individual characteristics are suggested to be a moderating variable that influences the relationship between self-disclosure and the outcome of its use. This dissertation study proposes the individual's skepticism toward advertising as a moderator between brand information disclosure and outcomes. Skepticism toward advertising refers to "consumer's general tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims" (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998, p. 160). The concept and scales of ad skepticism proposed by Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) provides a useful tool for measuring an individual's likelihood of believing the brand self-disclosing information. In order to examine and determine respondent's level of disbelief or skepticism towards advertisements, Obermiller and Spangenberg (1988) developed and tested a multi-item scale called the Skepticism Toward Advertising Scale (SKEP).

As noted by Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998), consumer's ad skepticism is a stable marketplace disbelief that can be generalized to a person's view of how the marketplace operates. Importantly, this disbelief is basic to the marketplace and varies within consumers, based on a variety of social and economic factors. In testing the scale on faculty and students, they provided evidence that personality traits, marketplace experience and education act as antecedents to ad skepticism. In specific, faculty were shown to be more skeptical than students; faculty differed significantly based on discipline of study with faculty from liberal arts being most skeptical; MBA students were identified as more skeptical than undergraduates and secondary students. Finally, the more skeptical participants towards the advertisements, the more likely they were to find the advertisements to be less likable, less believable, and less likely to be influential (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1988). Notably, more skeptical consumers evaluate advertiser's message more negatively than did less skeptical consumers (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998).

Given that brand information disclosure refers to any communication of brand-relevant information, thoughts, and feelings, which is generated and deliberately disclosed by marketers, any brand self-disclosing message via social media is inherently a marketing message. Thus, some people may interpret brand information disclosure in social media as a skeptical advertising message, whereas others may regard them as a more sincere and believable message of the brand. Thus, the highly skeptical consumers should be more likely to disbelieve and the less skeptical consumers more likely to believe the information disclosed by a brand.

The expected relational outcomes of brand information disclosure may not be observed if consumers do not believe the self-disclosing information. From the perspective of brand information disclosure via social media, how individuals perceive

and evaluate the disclosure of perceived backstage such as behind-the-scene of a brand can be considered a crucial variable for the expected outcomes of such information.

Why Social Media?

The current dissertation study considers social media as a venue for brand information disclosure. From a corporate communication perspective, it is suggested that the biggest strength of social media is providing companies with the ability to connect and communicate with consumers in a more personal and informal way (Lee, Park, and Hwang 2008).

In addition, social media applications such as corporate blogs have been suggested to be a form of a brand personification (Cho 2010). For example, corporate blogs post brand or industry-related stories using informal language in a personal diary format to imbue brands with personality traits (Cho 2010). As consumers have repeated opportunities to interact with personified brands via CMC tools, consumers may be engaging in an interpersonal relationship with the brand. Thus, social media can be understood to be the place where consumer-brand relationships can be intensified.

Furthermore, social media often presents an opportunity to access a brand's perceived backstage. For example, online brand communities provide the place where consumers access the backstage of a brand (Lutters and Ackerman 2003). Online brand communities present an opportunity for consumers to gain behind-the-scenes knowledge about a brand, which is a great incentive and attraction for enthusiastic consumers. As consumers have increasing chances to access backstage information about a brand, which would not be accessible otherwise, they are more likely to see authentic insights. In addition, unlike other website formats, social media provides an intimate, informal and personalized writing style, which creates the impression of revealing the author's real self (Trammell and Keshelashvili 2005). Thus, the current dissertation study considers

marketer-generated official blog as a social media platform for brand information disclosure.

Based upon the aforementioned discussions, the current dissertation proposes the following guiding framework to explore the effect of brand information disclosure. In the next section, specific research questions and hypotheses are proposed.

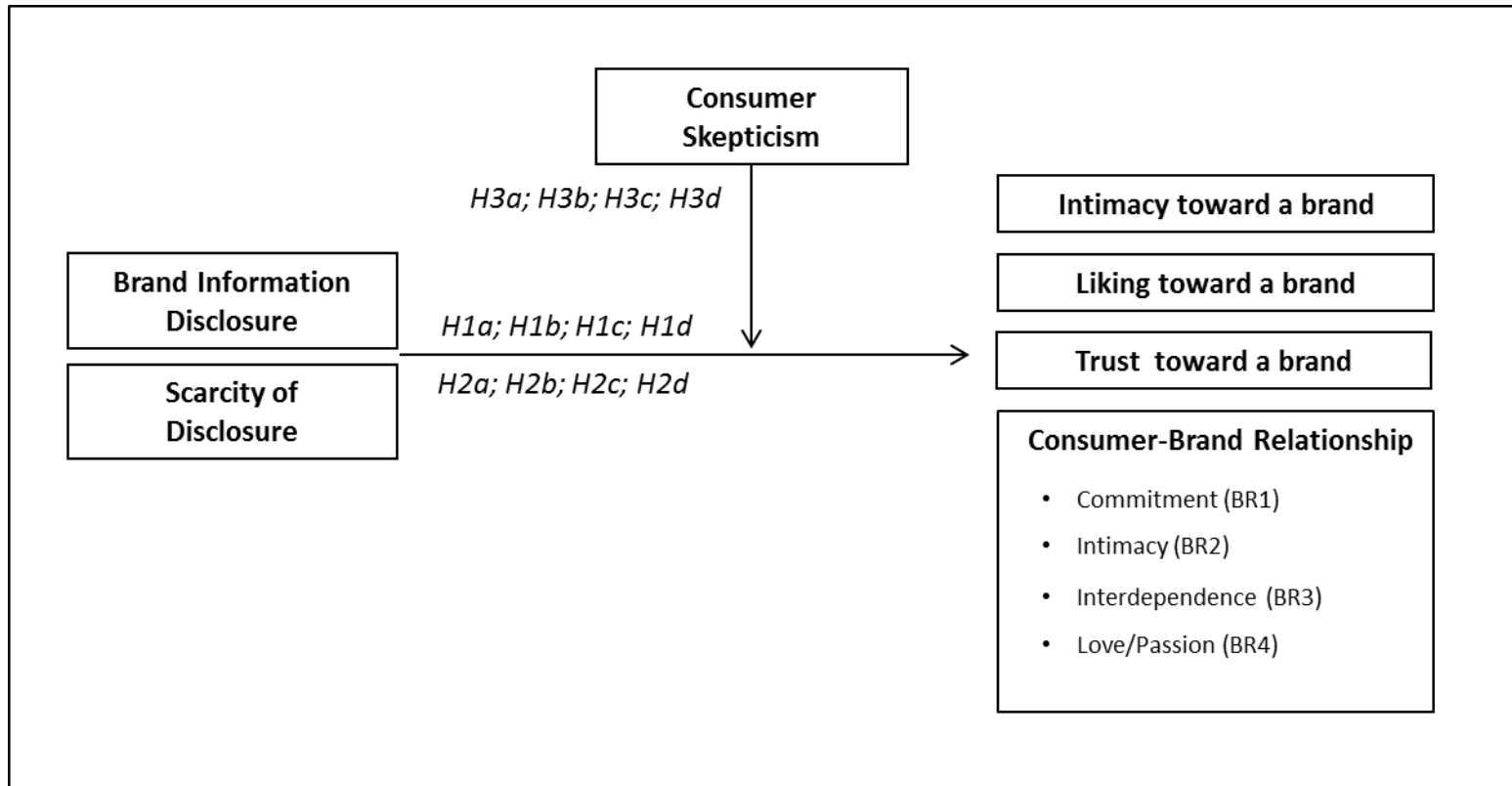


Figure 2.6: Guiding Framework of Brand Information Disclosure

Chapter 3: Guiding Framework and Research Hypotheses

The present dissertation study is based on four key premises. First, a consumer and brand can form a relationship which resembles an interpersonal relationship. Second, given that a brand and consumer can form a relationship, which is similar to an interpersonal relationship, disclosing information about a brand can be understood to be a type of self-disclosure of the brand. Third, the impact of self-disclosure researched in a human relationship context is adoptable to investigate consumer-brand relationships. Fourth, when a brand discloses itself more actively to consumers in terms of depth (i.e., front/back stage) in an exclusive manner (i.e., scarcity of information), consumers are likely to use them in evaluation of the brand.

Based upon previous literature, a guiding framework is developed to investigate the influence of brand information disclosure through social media. More specifically, the proposed framework seeks to address the following three research questions:

RQ1: How does the degree of brand information disclosure (i.e., perceived backstage visibility) via social media influence consumer responses toward a brand?

RQ2: How does the scarcity of brand information disclosure via social media influence consumer responses toward a brand?

RQ3: Would the consumer's general advertising skepticism moderate the impact of disclosure of brand's behind-the-scene?

The following sections provide the development of hypotheses of the current study.

HYPOTHESES

Degree of brand information disclosure

When people meet another person, they collect information about this prospective partner and make forecasts about the possibility for a future relationship (Berg and Clark 1986). Similarly, upon exposure to brand information disclosure, consumers can be expected to make an assessment of whether the brand may fit the prototype for a close relationship. Thus, these rapid assessments about the “new relationship” fitting the picture of a “close relationship” lead to an acceleration of positive evaluations such as intimacy and liking (Derlega, Winstead, and Greene 2008). Previous studies have found that people form more positive impressions of others who are willing to share more information about themselves as opposed to those who are less open (e.g., Davis and Sloan 1974; Jones and Archer 1976; Kleinke and Kahn 1980).

According to Altman (1979), the degree of self-disclosure exchanged between partners can provide a barometer of developing closeness. Previous studies have shown that the degree or depth of self-disclosure increases the outcome of self-disclosure, such as intimacy, friendships, and likings (Altman and Taylor 1973; Derlega et al 1993; Journal 1971). Moreover, previous studies (Morton 1978; Reis and Patrick 1996; Reis and Shaver 1998) have also suggested that particular types of self-disclosures, especially those that involve revealing the core self, are more closely linked to the experience of intimacy than are others. In addition, people view other individuals who disclose more intimate information as more trusting (Ajzen 1977).

Considering the fact that self-disclosure of more intimate and personal information would lead to greater intimacy, this study proposes that disclosure of a brand’s backstage information (i.e., providing perceived backstage) will generate positive outcomes in brand evaluation. That is, perceived backstage information of a brand

provides more intimate and personal information about a brand by revealing its true self. Accordingly, presenting perceived backstage information, such as behind-the-scenes contents, may lead to improved relationship outcomes between consumers and brands. Thus, the following hypotheses pertain to these propositions:

H1a: The greater the degree of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel intimacy toward the brand.

H1b: The greater the degree of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel liking toward the brand.

H1c: The greater the degree of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel trust toward the brand.

H1d: The greater the degree of brand information disclosure, the higher consumers have brand-relationship quality.

Scarcity of brand information disclosure

Different types of attributes of self-disclosure generate different outcomes (e.g., Jones and Archer 1976). In particular, it is suggested that evaluations of self-disclosure is dependent upon the perceived scarcity of the self-disclosure (Petty and Mirels 1981). Similarly, people evaluate the discloser more favorably if they appear to be selective. Thus, it is expected that a consumer's evaluation of a brand's self-disclosure would be different based upon the scarcity of the information. That is, when brand information disclosure is provided to only select consumers, in an exclusive way, the relational outcomes of self-disclosure are more likely than when brand information disclosure is available to public audiences. Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed:

H2a: The higher the scarcity of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel intimacy toward the brand.

H2b: The higher the scarcity of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel liking toward the brand.

H2c: The higher the scarcity of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel trust toward the brand.

H2d: The higher the scarcity of brand information disclosure, the higher consumers have brand-relationship quality.

Skepticism toward the brand information disclosure

People try to interpret the speaker's various reasons and goals for sharing intimate information (Derlega and Berg 1987; Miller et al. 1992). Judgments and evaluations of self-disclosers vary according to individual characteristics of persons who make the evaluations (Kleinke 1979). As a moderating factor between brand information disclosure and outcomes, this dissertation study proposes the individual's ad skepticism.

Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) define skepticism toward advertising as individual's tendency toward disbelief of advertised claims. This disbelief is basic to the marketplace and varies within consumers, based on a variety of social and economic factors. Advertising skepticism is suggested to be a key attribute in most advertising as consumers are not likely to respond to advertising in the desired manner if they do not believe what it says (Beltramini 1994). Moreover one's acceptance of an advertised claim is related to the amount of persuasive influence the advertisement has on the viewer (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). Similarly, the expected relational outcomes of brand information disclosure may not be observed if consumers do not believe the self-disclosing information.

Thus, it is highly possible that consumers with high skepticism toward the brand information disclosure are less likely to have relational outcomes toward the brand.

Therefore the following research questions are proposed:

H3a: The effect of the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure on intimacy toward the brand will vary according to the consumers' advertising skepticism level.

H3b: The effect of the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure on liking toward the brand will vary according to the consumers' advertising skepticism level.

H3c: The effect of the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure on trust toward the brand will vary according to the consumers' advertising skepticism level.

H3d: The effect of the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure on consumer-brand relationship will vary according to the consumers' advertising skepticism level.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the study design, instruments used for major constructs, and experimental procedure. The purpose of this dissertation study was to investigate the influence of brand information disclosure through social media on consumer evaluation of a brand. Specifically, the study explored the impact of degree (i.e., backstage visibility in brand-relevant information) and scarcity (i.e., information scarcity) of brand information disclosure on intimacy, liking, trust toward a brand, and consumer-brand relationship. In addition, the current study attempted to uncover the moderating role of consumers' skepticism on relational outcomes. Given the objective of this study, two pretests and one between-subjects experiment were conducted to examine the above-presented hypotheses. An experimental design is employed to test hypotheses, because it affords the possibility of manipulating and controlling the most important factors for the researcher (Kirk, 1968).

PRETEST I: PRODUCT CATEGORY AND TOPIC OF BEHIND-THE-SCENES INFORMATION

Overview

The purpose of this pretest was to determine which categories of products and which topics of behind-the-scenes information would be most desirable for the main experiment. A total of 29 participants who did not participate in the main experiment were recruited from undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Texas at Austin ($n=14$) as well as from the general population ($n=15$) for participation in the pretest. Fifty-two percent of the pretest respondents were men, and the average age of the respondents was 29 years. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to assess consumers' perceptions of brand communication strategies across various social

media platforms. A series of open-ended questions were presented to assess consumers' preferences on product categories about which they regularly communicate via social media. First, participants were asked to write down at least five names of different brands' social media sites (i.e., Starbucks Fanpage on Facebook, JetBlue's Twitter account, Coca-Cola's YouTube channel) that they regularly visit. Then, participants were provided with definitions and the conceptualization of brands' behind-the-scenes information. The ice cream brand Ben & Jerry's and its official blog were chosen as an example to illustrate behind-the-scenes information. In the next section, participants were asked to choose one brand for which they most wanted to learn behind-the-scenes information, among the five brands that they had listed in the previous question. Lastly, participants were asked to complete a free-elicitation task (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) to identify the topics of behind-the-scenes information that they would like to see.

Results

Findings from the first pretest indicated that food and drink products such as coffee (e.g., Starbucks), candy (e.g., Jell-O), fast food (e.g., McDonald's), ice cream (e.g., Ben & Jerry's), and restaurants (e.g., IHOP) were the most often visited brands' social media sites, followed by apparel and shoes, automotive, and cosmetics. In addition, findings indicated that food and drink was the most desirable product category for seeking behind-the-scenes information about the brand, followed by apparel and shoes, electronics and games, and media. Lastly, according to the results of the pretest, product-making process was the most desired topic of the brands' behind-the-scenes information, followed by new product development and cause-related marketing.

Product category which subjects frequently visit in social media		Desired product category for behind-the-scene information		Desired topic of behind-the-scenes information	
Food & Drink (including restaurants and cafes)	62	Food & Drink (including restaurants and cafes)	19	Product-making process	21
Apparel & Shoes (including retail stores)	31	Apparel & Shoes (including retail stores)	6	New product development	3
Automotive	14	Electronics & Games	2	Cause-related marketing	3
Cosmetics	13	Media	2	Employee stories	2
Electronics & Games	10				
Media (e.g., Newspapers, Magazines)	6				
Airlines	5				
Organizations	4				

Table 4.1: Findings in Pretest I

DEVELOPMENT OF STIMULUS MATERIALS

Coffee product and coffee stores enjoy a rich empirical research history, particularly in consumer-brand relationship studies (e.g., Chang and Chieng 2006; Fournier and Yao 1997). Based on previous academic work and the results of the first pretest, coffee products were chosen for the main experiment. To eliminate any confounds based on prior brand familiarity and brand preference, a fictitious brand name, “Mike’s Coffee,” was created. The behind-the-scenes information on coffee products from Mike’s Coffee was presented in a single blog posting with brief headline, a relevant

picture, and body text. A blog was selected for this study out of various social media platforms because (1) the corporate blog is the optimized vehicle for providing a large amount of information, compared to Twitter's 140-character or Facebook's 1000-character limit per post; (2) among various available social media platforms, the corporate blog has received the most attention as a tool for providing various brand-related content to consumers in a personal diary format (Ahuja and Medury 2010; Cho 2010). Based on real-life examples from coffee retailers' blogs, five different topics for blog postings were developed. Then, two different levels (high vs. low) of degree of information disclosure were created for those five blog postings. Thus, five low degree disclosure and five high degree disclosure blog postings were created for the pretest.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND MANIPULATIONS

Degree of information disclosure

Degree of information disclosure was conceptualized as the extent to which social media content provides perceived backstage information about a brand. Degree of brand information disclosure was manipulated at two levels, with high degree and low degree conditions. The low degree condition was operationalized as a blog posting containing frontstage information which provided the very basic information that a brand usually makes available to consumers. The high degree condition was operationalized as a blog posting containing frontstage information as well as behind-the-scenes information about the frontstage information, which thus provided more than the basic information that a brand usually makes available to consumers. Thus, the blog postings in the high degree condition included deeper and broader information than the blog postings in the low degree condition. Because previous studies (e.g., Im et al. 2008; Lauren et al. 1998)

found that depth and breadth are highly correlated, greater degree of information disclosure was created by manipulating both depth and breadth.

Scarcity of information disclosure

Scarcity of brand information disclosure in the current study was conceptualized as the extent to which social media content was provided exclusively. For the purpose of this study, scarcity of brand information disclosure was manipulated at two levels, high and low. The high scarcity condition was operationalized as a blog posting indicating that the information is exclusively available for consumers who are invited to and join the membership-based blog. The low scarcity condition was operationalized as a blog posting indicating that the information is available elsewhere as well. Scarcity was thus manipulated by indicating the private or public nature of the information in the blog posting.

Consumer skepticism

Consumer skepticism in the current study was conceptualized and measured as the individual's general tendency toward disbelief regarding advertised claims. Subject skepticism as a consumer was assessed as the sum of the nine items that comprise Obermiller and Spangenberg's (1998) advertising skepticism scale, using a 5-point scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, where the higher the score, the higher the skepticism. Then, consumer skepticism scores were divided into two groups (i.e., low vs. high skepticism) on the basis of a median split.

Advertising Skepticism	
1.	We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising.
2.	Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer.
3.	I believe advertising is informative.
4.	Advertising is generally truthful.
5.	Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.
6.	Advertising is truth well told.
7.	In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.
8.	I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements.
9.	Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.

Table 4.2: Advertising Skepticism Items

PRETEST II: PILOT TEST FOR THE BRAND INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

Overview

The objective of the second pretest was to select the most successfully manipulated blog posting among the five different topics from the first pretest. A total of 34 participants who did not participate in the first pretest or the main experiment were recruited from undergraduate courses at the University of Texas at Austin (n=14) as well as from the general population (n=20). They were randomly assigned to one of two conditions.

In low degree condition, participants were exposed to five blog postings which carried very basic information about Mike's Coffee. In the high degree condition, participants were exposed to five blog postings which provided more than the basic information about Mike's Coffee. In order to eliminate the possibility of carry-over, practice, or fatigue effects, the order of the blog postings was randomly determined using the randomization function in the online survey software Qualtrics.

In this pretest, two tests were conducted to determine: (1) whether the manipulation of degree of information disclosure differed between the low degree and high degree conditions; and (2) which blog posting would generate the maximum difference between the low degree and high degree conditions. Participants were asked to read five blog postings. For each posting, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following two statements: (1) "The blog posting gives out behind-the-scenes information about Mike's Coffee"; (2) "The blog posting provides consumers with the inside scoop on Mike's Coffee." These instruments were developed to explore subjects' perceived amount of behind-the-scenes information. Ratings were anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine the effect of the degree of information disclosure manipulation on perceived amount of behind-the-scenes information for the five blog posting pairs. Among the five different topics, postings about the new iced coffee offered by Mike's Coffee were the only pair that was successfully manipulated in terms of the degree of disclosure. The results suggested a main effect for degree of disclosure on perceived amount of behind-the-scene information [$F(1, 33) = 17.656, p < .001$]. Pretest participants exposed to the high degree condition ($M = 4.07, SD = .616$) perceived more behind-the-scenes information than those exposed to the low degree condition ($M = 2.80, SD = 1.005$). Thus, the manipulation of the degree of disclosure was appropriately perceived by the pretest participants. As a result, the blog posting about iced coffee was chosen for the stimuli in the main experiment.

MAIN STUDY

Experimental Design

A between-subjects 2 X 2 X 2 experimental design was employed to test the hypotheses. The three factors were the degree of information disclosure (high vs. low), the scarcity of information disclosure (high vs. low), and the consumers' general advertising skepticism (high vs. low). The degree and scarcity of brand information disclosure were manipulated variables, whereas skepticism was a measured variable that yielded low versus high advertising skepticism groups on the basis of a median split. The study design is presented in Table 4.3.

High Skepticism

		Degree of Information Disclosure	
		High (i.e., Frontstage-only)	Low (i.e., Frontstage + Perceived backstage)
Scarcity of Information Disclosure	High (i.e., Members only)		
	Low (i.e., Public)		

Low Skepticism

		Degree of Information Disclosure	
		High (i.e., Frontstage-only)	Low (i.e., Frontstage + Perceived backstage)
Scarcity of Information Disclosure	High (i.e., Members only)		
	Low (i.e., Public)		

Table 4.3: Study Design

Participants

A total of 256 participants were recruited from an online consumer panel (i.e., SurveySampling) consisting of Web users. As panel members, subjects agreed to participate in this online experiment for various rewards. Among 400 consumer panel members who submitted their data, 256 were usable and included in the final sample after eliminating 56 respondents who submitted incomplete surveys and 88 respondents who completed the survey faster than the researcher's estimated minimum response time (i.e., less than 10 minutes). Among the participants, 35.2% (n=90) were male and 64.8% (n=166) were female. The subjects came from the general population, which contributed to the external validity of the study results, although they were a bit younger than the general population. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 36 with an average of 27. The majority of the participants were Caucasian (73.4%), followed by African-American (13.7%), Hispanic (5.1%) and Asian (5.1%). More than half of the participants had at least some post-secondary education. Table ## presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. In addition, the majority of the subjects reported that they spend more than 1 hour using social media on the average weekday (see Table 4.4).

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	90	35.2
Female	166	64.8
<i>Age</i>		
19-23	74	29.0
24-28	82	32.0
29-33	71	27.7
34-36	29	11.3
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Caucasian	188	73.4
African-American	35	13.7
Hispanic American	13	5.1
Asian	13	5.1
Other	7	2.7
<i>Education</i>		
Less than high school	6	2
High school/GED	59	23.0
Some college credit	84	32.8
Associate degree	17	6.6
Bachelor's degree	69	27.0
Master's degree	13	5.1
Professional degree	7	2.7
Other	1	.4
<i>Household Income</i>		
Under \$20,000	40	15.6
\$20,000 to \$29,999	42	16.4
\$30,000 to \$39,999	33	12.9
\$40,000 to \$49,999	33	12.9
\$50,000 to \$59,999	22	8.6
\$60,000 to \$69,999	13	5.1
\$70,000 to \$79,999	19	7.4
\$80,000 to over	31	11.7
\$100,000		
Prefer not to answer	23	9.0

Table 4.4: Sample Characteristics

Hours on an average weekday	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	72	28.1
1 to 1 hour and 59 min	67	26.2
2 to 2 hour and 59 min	43	16.8
3 to 3 hour and 59 min	27	10.5
4 to 4 hour and 59 min	22	8.6
5 hours or more	25	9.8

Table 4.5: Sample Social Media Usage

Procedure

Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to understand general consumer-related issues in the marketplace. The whole experiment was carried out online. Since the experiment was conducted online, signed informed consent was not obtained. Instead, participants' voluntary act of clicking on the 'next' button and filling out the questionnaire was considered to constitute informed consent.

Prior to being assigned to one of four experimental conditions, subjects were exposed to the consumer-brand relationship scenario which described their relationship with a fictitious coffee brand (Mike's Coffee). Since relationships are formed over long periods of time, it might seem difficult to manipulate the consumer-brand relationship over the course of an experiment. However, previous studies indicate that even without an actual long-term relationship having been formed by participants, the effects of consumer-brand relationships nevertheless can be observed, which suggests that a relationship can in fact be primed in experimental studies (Aggarwal 2002, 2004). Thus, participants were presented with descriptions to prime a consumer-brand relationship and

were asked to imagine themselves in the situation described (see Table 4.5). After reading the description, the participants were asked several questions designed to measure the effectiveness of the relationship priming.

Participants were then randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions (i.e., Degree x Scarcity), and were exposed to a blog posting that contained information about Mike's Coffee's iced coffee. After exposure to the stimuli, subjects were asked to answer questionnaires including the consumer skepticism measure, the dependent measures, and demographic questions.

Mike's Coffee is located a few blocks from where you live. You go there regularly both on weekdays as well as weekends. You enjoy going there – the coffee is great, the place is cozy and the people are fun. You feel special there, not just any regular customer. They understand what you need and make extra effort to fulfill it. Sometimes when you don't go there for a while, you start to miss them. And the feeling must be mutual since they also give you a big welcome back. You like them and care about them as much as they seem to care about you. It would be a sad day if they were ever to close the place down. You have been going there for so long that they feel like family to you. Their prices are a bit above the average, but their interaction with you is beyond just money. Each time you visit Mike's Coffee, you appreciate them even more.

Table 4.6: Consumer-Brand Relationship Scenario (Aggarwal 2002)

Dependent Variables

1. Liking toward a brand

The likeability scale was employed to measure consumers' liking toward the brand. The scale is composed of four single-word descriptors with a 7-point response format. The scale was originally developed to assess a person's opinion of an object with an emphasis on attraction. Moon (2000) used them in order to measure intimate information exchange between consumers and websites.

Liking toward a brand	
1.	Mike's Coffee is likable.
2.	Mike's Coffee is friendly.
3.	Mike's Coffee is kind.
4.	Mike's Coffee is helpful.

Table 4.7: Items of liking toward a brand

2. Intimacy toward a brand

Price and Arnould's (1999) perceived friendliness scale was employed to measure the extent to which a person considers another person to be likeable and pleasant to be around. After careful review of the existing instruments, this friendliness scale was adopted instead of a scale of intimacy in interpersonal relationship, because the focus of the original scale was on the perceived friendliness of a service provider by a client. The six-item, five-point scale measures the extent to which a consumer perceives the brand as friendly. The items were modified in order to fit them to the consumer-brand relationship context.

Intimacy toward a brand	
1.	Mike's Coffee likes to talk with people.
2.	Mike's Coffee tries to establish a personal relationship.
3.	Mike's Coffee is friendly.
4.	Mike's Coffee treats me like just a customer rather than a person with specific needs and desires. (r)
5.	I like Mike's Coffee as a person.
6.	Mike's Coffee is very pleasant.

Table 4.8: Items of intimacy toward a brand

3. Trust toward a brand

A scale of trustworthiness toward the retailer (DeWulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Iacobucci 2001) was adopted to measure the level of trust toward a brand. Three Likert-type statements with a five-point response format were used to assess consumers' belief in a brand's reliability and integrity.

Trust toward a brand	
1.	Mike's Coffee gives me a feeling of trust.
2.	I have trust in Mike's Coffee.
3.	Mike's Coffee gives me a trustworthy impression.

Table 4.9: Items of trust toward a brand

4. Consumer-brand relationship quality

Based on the studies of Fournier (1994) and Aaker et al. (2004), Huber et al. (2010) developed a consumer-brand relationship quality scale. Four dimensions of consumer-brand relationship, including love/passion, commitment, interdependence, and intimacy, were adopted for the purpose of this study. Each dimension was assessed via two indicators with a five-point response format.

Consumer-brand relationship
Love/Passion
1. If Mike's Coffee were a person, I would have intensive feelings toward it.
2. No other coffee shop can quite take the place of Mike's Coffee.
Commitment
1. I am very loyal to Mike's Coffee.
2. I would stick to Mike's Coffee even if it lets me down once.
Interdependence
1. I feel like something is missing when I don't visit Mike's Coffee for a while.
2. Mike's Coffee plays an important role in my life.
Intimacy
1. If Mike's Coffee were a person, we would be close friends.
2. If Mike's Coffee were a person, I would trust it with confidential information.

Table 4.10: Items of consumer-brand relationship

5. Additional Dependent Measures

Additionally, attitude toward the information (Mackenzie and Lutz 1989), enjoyment toward the information (Hsu and Lin 2008; van der Heijden 2004), perceived friendliness (Price and Arnould 1999), attitude toward the brand (Mitchel 1986), and purchase intention (Bearden, Lichtenstein, and Teel 1984) were measured to explore any additional impact of brand information disclosure.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Results

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency of major constructs used in the study was examined, and the results are shown in Table 14. As an independent variable, advertising skepticism was measured. As dependent variables, intimacy toward a brand, liking toward a brand, trust toward a brand, and consumer-brand relationship quality (commitment, intimacy, interdependence, and love/passion) were measured. As shown in Table 5.1, advertising skepticism and all dependent measures were reliable across conditions.

Major Constructs	# of Items	<i>a</i>
Advertising skepticism	9	.951
Intimacy toward a brand	6	.773
Liking toward a brand	3	.914
Trust toward a brand	3	.895
Consumer-brand relationship quality		
<i>Commitment (BR1)</i>	2	.801
<i>Intimacy (BR2)</i>	2	.812
<i>Interdependence (BR3)</i>	2	.886
<i>Love/passion (BR4)</i>	2	.795

*N = 256

Table 5.1: Reliability Analysis of Measurement Items

Manipulation Check

To ensure that participants appreciated the degree manipulation, subjects were asked to indicate (1) degree of disclosure and (2) scarcity of disclosure by answering a

series of manipulation check questions (see Table 5.2). Subjects who incorrectly identified their condition were eliminated and excluded from analysis. Thus, 100% (N=256) of the subjects identified their degree and scarcity condition correctly.

An additional manipulation check was conducted to ascertain whether degree of disclosure had been successfully manipulated in terms of perceived amount of behind-the-scenes information. In order to check subjects' perceived amount of behind-the-scenes information, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements: (1) "The blog posting gives out behind-the-scenes information about Mike's Coffee"; (2) "The blog posting provides consumers with the inside scoop of Mike's Coffee." These instruments were developed to explore subjects' perceived amount of behind-the-scenes information. Ratings were anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A one-way ANOVA result showed that the degree manipulation was effective in terms of perceived amount of behind-the-scenes information. Participants in the high degree condition reported a greater perceived amount of behind-the-scenes information than did participants in the low degree condition ($F(1, 255) = 81.859, p < .001, M_{\text{high_degree}} = 4.51, M_{\text{low_degree}} = 3.48$). Similarly, participants in the high degree condition indicated a greater amount of inside scoop on Mike's Coffee than did participants in the low degree condition ($F(1, 255) = 30.509, p < .001, M_{\text{high_degree}} = 4.36, M_{\text{low_degree}} = 3.73$).

Degree of Disclosure	<p>About the blog posting you just read, would you say that it provides...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the very basic information that a business usually makes available to consumers • more than the basic information that a business usually makes available to consumers • less than the basic information that a business usually makes available to consumers
Scarcity of Disclosure	<p>About the blog posting you just read, would you say that it is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open to everyone • is exclusively available to their fans who are invited to join the blog

Table 5.2: Manipulation Check Questions

For the consumer skepticism variable, high and low groups were created by splitting the sample into two groups (high and low) based on a median split. The mean score of the low skepticism group ($M = 4.05$) was significantly higher than that of the high skepticism group ($M = 2.46$), $F(1, 255) = 518.72$, $p < .001$. The lower the score, the higher was the degree of skepticism. In addition, an ANOVA revealed no differences in skepticism across the four degree-scarcity conditions.

Hypothesis Testing

First, the zero-order correlations among the dependent variables were examined (see Table 5.3). All dependent variables were significantly positively correlated with one another at the .01 level.

	Liking	Trust	Commitment (BR1)	Intimacy (BR2)	Interdependence (BR3)	Love (BR4)
Intimacy	.627	.831	.558	.587	.533	.571
Liking		.679	.576	.549	.519	.509
Trust			.603	.615	.580	.618
Commitment (BR1)				.685	.749	.734
Intimacy(BR2)					.712	.785
Interdependence (BR3)						.787

Notes: All correlations significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N = 256 for all tests.

Table 5.3: Correlations among Dependent Variables

A 2x2x2 multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed with the manipulated independent variables Degree (Low, High) and Scarcity (Low, High), the measured independent variable Skepticism (Low, High), and the seven dependent variables. As shown in Table 2, a significant main effect of Degree (Wilks' $\Lambda = .93$, $p < .05$), and Skepticism (Wilks' $\Lambda = .84$, $p < .001$) was obtained, as were trends for two-way interactions for Degree x Scarcity (Wilks' $\Lambda = .95$, $p = .094$) and Scarcity x Skepticism (Wilks' $\Lambda = .95$, $p = .082$).

Multivariate Factor	Wilks' Lambda	F-value	p-value
Degree	.93	2.50	.019
Scarcity	.99	.29	.958
Skepticism	.84	6.64	.000
Degree x Scarcity	.95	1.77	.094
Degree x Skepticism	.95	1.83	.082
Scarcity x Skepticism	.96	1.55	.151
Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism	.98	.55	.797

Table 5.4: Multivariate Analysis of Variance Results

Hypotheses 1a-3a predicted that the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure will each increase consumers' feelings of intimacy toward a brand, and that these effects will be moderated by consumers' skepticism level. To test these hypotheses, several univariate ANOVAs were performed on intimacy toward a brand, include tests for Degree, Scarcity, Skepticism, and the two- and three-way interactions among these variables. As suggested by the ANOVA results in Table 5.5, the main effect for Degree was significant, $F(1,248) = 9.18, p = .003$, as was the Skepticism main effect, $F(1,248) = 13.43, p < .001$. Consistent with predictions, participants in the high degree of disclosure condition reported greater intimacy toward the brand ($M = 4.48$) than did participants in the low disclosure condition ($M = 4.24$). Also participants in the low skepticism condition reported greater intimacy toward the brand ($M = 4.50$) than did participants in the high skepticism condition ($M = 4.22$).

In addition, the Degree x Scarcity interaction was significant, $F(1,248) = 5.10, p < .05$. Participants in the high degree/high scarcity condition reported greater intimacy toward the brand ($M = 4.55$) than did participants in the high degree/low scarcity condition ($M = 4.41$), low degree/high scarcity condition ($M = 4.13$), and low degree/low scarcity condition ($M = 4.35$). Upon closer examination of the interaction effects, when a

brand provided its perceived backstage information exclusively, subjects felt the strongest intimacy toward the brand. A notable finding is the potential backlash of the scarcity of disclosure in the low degree disclosure condition. That is, when the information contains only frontstage information of the brand, making the information exclusive was not effective for generating consumer intimacy toward the brand. The main effect of Scarcity and the Degree x Skepticism and Scarcity x Skepticism interactions were not significant. Table 5.6 displays the means for all dependent variables by each of the eight conditions; Figures 1-7 display the means graphically.

Dependent Variable	Factor	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Intimacy toward a brand	Degree	9.18	.003
	Scarcity	.24	.622
	Skepticism	13.43	.000
	Degree x Scarcity	5.095	.025
	Degree x Skepticism	.09	.926
	Scarcity x Skepticism	.06	.940
	Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism	.39	.533
Liking toward a brand	Degree	8.77	.003
	Scarcity	.008	.930
	Skepticism	29.67	.000
	Degree x Scarcity	7.67	.006
	Degree x Skepticism	5.21	.023
	Scarcity x Skepticism	.28	.599
	Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism	.17	.683
Trust toward a brand	Degree	6.64	.011
	Scarcity	.84	.359
	Skepticism	22.90	.000
	Degree x Scarcity	4.24	.041
	Degree x Skepticism	.43	.513
	Scarcity x Skepticism	.11	.736
	Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism	.64	.424

Table 5.5: Univariate Analysis of Variance Results

Dependent Variable	Factor	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Commitment (BR)	Degree	5.422	.021
	Scarcity	.001	.975
	Skepticism	16.103	.000
	Degree x Scarcity	.150	.699
	Degree x Skepticism	2.257	.134
	Scarcity x Skepticism	1.082	.299
	Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism	.264	.608
Intimacy (BR)	Degree	8.222	.004
	Scarcity	.344	.558
	Skepticism	33.498	.000
	Degree x Scarcity	1.094	.297
	Degree x Skepticism	.569	.451
	Scarcity x Skepticism	2.103	.148
	Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism	.006	.938
Interdependence (BR)	Degree	11.647	.001
	Scarcity	.184	.668
	Skepticism	24.332	.000
	Degree x Scarcity	1.683	.196
	Degree x Skepticism	.344	.558
	Scarcity x Skepticism	1.915	.168
	Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism	.498	.481
Love/passion (BR)	Degree	11.140	.001
	Scarcity	.518	.472
	Skepticism	20.257	.000
	Degree x Scarcity	2.149	.144
	Degree x Skepticism	.062	.804
	Scarcity x Skepticism	5.669	.018
	Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism	.333	.564

Table 5.5 (cont.): Univariate Analysis of Variance Results

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables			<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>n</i>
	Degree	Scarcity	Skepticism			
Intimacy toward a brand	High	High	High	4.43	.11	32
			Low	4.67	.12	26
		Low	High	4.23	.10	37
			Low	4.58	.12	28
	Low	High	High	3.97	.11	35
			Low	4.29	.11	34
		Low	High	4.23	.12	29
			Low	4.47	.11	35
Liking toward a brand	High	High	High	6.30	.15	32
			Low	6.75	.17	26
		Low	High	6.11	.14	37
			Low	6.36	.16	28
	Low	High	High	5.48	.15	35
			Low	6.33	.15	34
		Low	High	5.80	.16	29
			Low	6.63	.15	35
Trust toward a brand	High	High	High	4.31	.12	32
			Low	4.62	.13	26
		Low	High	4.18	.11	37
			Low	4.56	.12	28
	Low	High	High	3.81	.11	35
			Low	4.35	.11	34
		Low	High	4.15	.12	29
			Low	4.50	.11	35

Table 5.6: Cell Means and Sample Sizes

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables			<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>n</i>
	Degree	Scarcity	Skepticism			
Commitment (BR1)	High	High	High	4.33	.14	32
			Low	4.52	.15	26
		Low	High	4.24	.13	37
			Low	4.54	.14	28
	Low	High	High	3.97	.13	35
			Low	4.35	.13	34
		Low	High	3.86	.14	29
			Low	4.54	.13	35
Intimacy (BR2)	High	High	High	3.97	.15	32
			Low	4.37	.17	26
		Low	High	3.77	.14	37
			Low	4.46	.16	28
	Low	High	High	3.47	.15	35
			Low	4.01	.15	34
		Low	High	3.48	.16	29
			Low	4.36	.15	35
Interdependence (BR3)	High	High	High	4.14	.15	32
			Low	4.54	.17	26
		Low	High	3.97	.14	37
			Low	4.52	.16	28
	Low	High	High	3.64	.15	35
			Low	4.01	.15	34
		Low	High	3.60	.16	29
			Low	4.43	.15	35
Love/passion (BR4)	High	High	High	4.11	.15	32
			Low	4.42	.17	26
		Low	High	3.84	.14	37
			Low	4.54	.16	28
	Low	High	High	3.69	.14	35
			Low	3.82	.15	34
		Low	High	3.60	.16	29
			Low	4.37	.14	35

Table 5.6 (cont.): Cell Means and Sample Sizes

Hypotheses 1b-3b predicted that degree and scarcity of brand information disclosure will increase consumers' feelings of liking toward a brand, and that these effects will be moderated by consumers' skepticism level. To test these hypotheses, univariate ANOVAs were performed on Liking toward a brand for Degree, Scarcity, Skepticism, and their two- and three-way interactions. As seen in Table 3, the main effect for Degree was significant, $F(1,248) = 8.77, p = .003$, as was the Skepticism main effect, $F(1,248) = 29.67, p < .001$. Consistent with predictions, participants in the high degree condition reported greater liking toward Mike's Coffee ($M = 6.38$) than did participants in the low disclosure condition ($M = 6.06$). In addition, participants in the low skepticism condition reported greater liking ($M = 6.52$) than did participants in the high skepticism condition ($M = 5.93$). High scarcity participants were not significantly more likely to feel liking ($M = 6.22$) than were low scarcity participants ($M = 6.23$).

Furthermore, a significant Degree \times Scarcity ($F(1,248) = 7.67, p = .006$) interaction was detected. Participants in the high degree/high scarcity condition reported greater liking toward the brand ($M = 6.53$) than did participants in the high degree/low scarcity condition ($M = 6.24$), low degree/high scarcity condition ($M = 5.91$), and low degree/low scarcity condition ($M = 6.22$). That is, when a brand provided its perceived backstage information exclusively, subjects felt the strongest liking toward the brand. However, as observed in intimacy toward a brand, when the information reveals frontstage information about the brand only, exclusive feature information was not effective in generating greater liking toward the brand.

Another notable finding was the Degree \times Skepticism interaction, $F(1,248) = 5.21, p = .023$. Participants in the low degree/high skepticism condition reported less liking toward the brand ($M = 5.64$) than did participants in the high degree/high skepticism condition ($M = 6.21$), high degree/low skepticism condition ($M = 6.55$), and

low degree/low skepticism condition ($M = 6.48$). This finding indicates that high skeptical consumers tend to feel significantly stronger liking toward the brand when they perceived the brand's perceived backstage comparing to when they perceived frontstage-only information.

Hypotheses 1c-3c predicted that degree and scarcity of brand information disclosure will increase consumers' feelings of trust toward the brand, and that these effects will be moderated by consumers' skepticism level. To test these hypotheses, univariate ANOVAs were performed on Trust for Degree, Scarcity, Skepticism, and their two- and three-way interactions. As seen in Table 3, the main effect for Degree was significant, $F(1,248) = 6.64, p < .01$. Participants in the high degree condition reported greater trust ($M = 4.42$) than did participants in the low degree condition ($M = 4.20$). The main effect for Skepticism was also significant, $F(1,248) = 22.90, p < .001$. Participants in the low skepticism condition reported greater trust ($M = 4.51$) than did participants in the high skepticism condition ($M = 4.11$). High scarcity participants were not significantly more likely to feel trust ($M = 4.35$) than were low scarcity participants ($M = 4.27$).

Another notable finding was the Degree x Scarcity interaction, $F(1,248) = 4.24, p < .05$. Participants in the high degree/high scarcity condition reported greater trust toward the brand ($M = 4.46$) than did participants in the high degree/low scarcity condition ($M = 4.37$), low degree/high scarcity condition ($M = 4.08$), and low degree/low scarcity condition ($M = 4.33$). That is, when a brand provided its perceived backstage information exclusively, subjects felt the strongest trust toward the brand. However, as observed in intimacy toward a brand and liking toward a brand, when the information reveals frontstage information about the brand only, exclusive nature of information disclosure

was not effective in generating greater trust toward the brand. The Degree x Skepticism and Scarcity x Skepticism interactions were not significant.

Finally, Hypotheses 1d-3d predicted that degree and scarcity of brand information disclosure will increase consumers' feelings of relationship with the brand, and that these effects will be moderated by consumers' skepticism level. The relationship concept was tested via four variables: Commitment, Intimacy, Interdependence, and Love/Passion. To test relationship hypotheses, univariate ANOVAs were performed on Commitment, Intimacy, Interdependence, and Love/passion for Degree, Scarcity, Skepticism, and their two- and three-way interactions. As seen in Table 3, the main effect for Degree on Commitment was significant, $F(1,248) = 5.42, p < .05$, as it was on Intimacy, $F(1,248) = 8.22, p < .01$, Interdependence, $F(1,248) = 11.65, p < .001$, and Love, $F(1,248) = 11.14, p < .001$. Participants in the high degree condition relative to the low degree condition reported greater commitment (4.41 vs. 4.18), intimacy (4.14 vs. 3.83), interdependence (4.29 vs. 3.92), and love (4.23 vs. 3.87).

In addition, the main effect for Skepticism on Commitment was significant, $F(1,248) = 16.10, p < .001$, as it was on Intimacy, $F(1,248) = 33.50, p < .001$, Interdependence, $F(1,248) = 24.33, p < .001$, and Love, $F(1,248) = 20.26, p < .001$. Participants in the low skepticism condition relative to the high skepticism condition reported greater commitment (4.49 vs. 4.10), intimacy (4.30 vs. 3.67), interdependence (4.38 vs. 3.84), and love (4.29 vs. 3.81). Further, the Scarcity x Skepticism interaction on Love was also significant, $F(1,248) = 5.67, p = .018$, though the interaction pattern was not easily interpretable. High scarcity participants were not significantly more likely than low scarcity participants to feel commitment (4.29 vs. 4.30), intimacy (3.96 vs. 4.02), interdependence (4.08 vs. 4.13), or love (4.01 vs. 4.09). None of the other Degree x

Skepticism or Scarcity x Skepticism interactions was significant for Commitment, Intimacy, Interdependence, or Love.

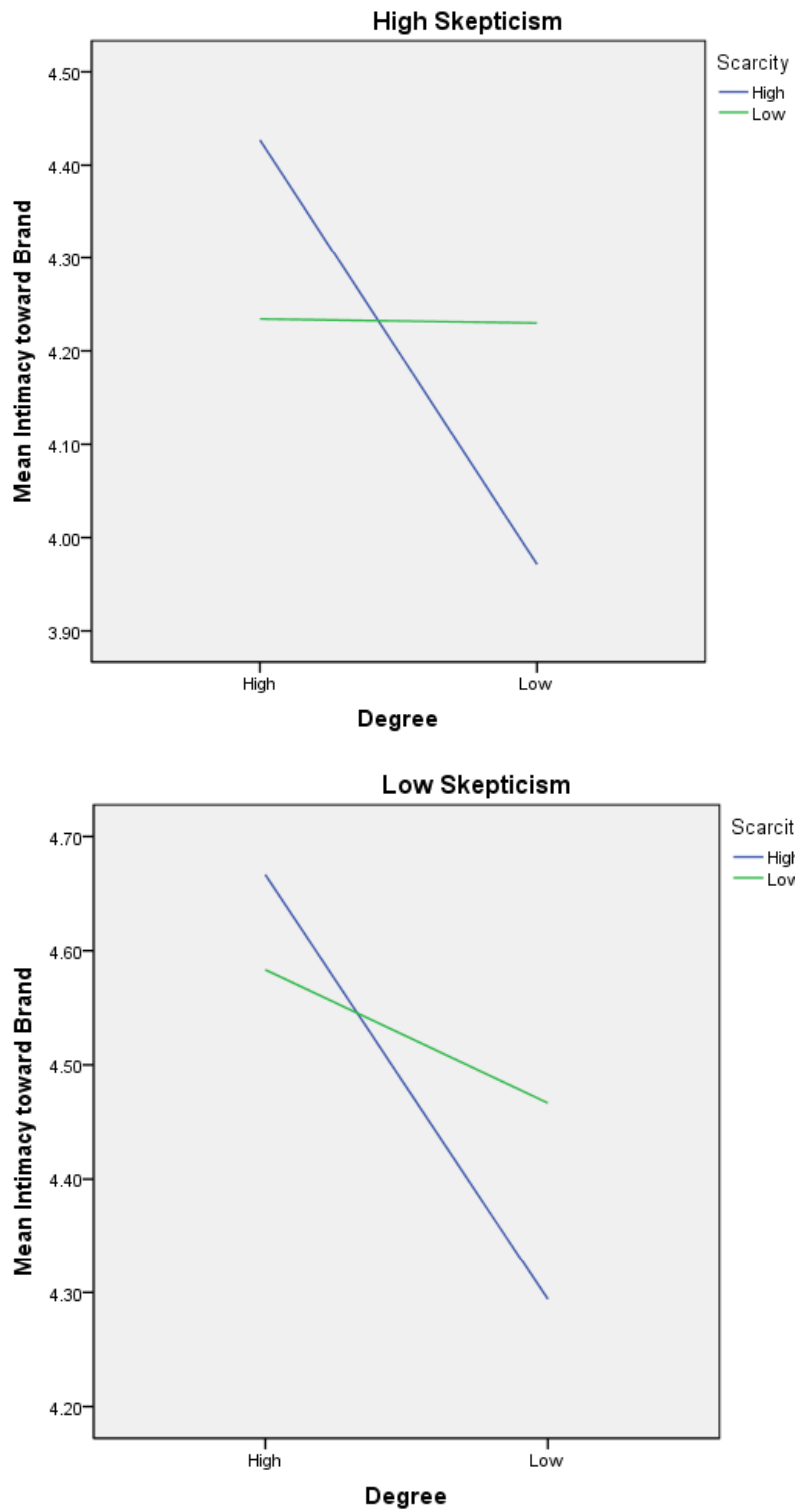


Figure 5.1: Mean intimacy toward a brand by degree, scarcity, and skepticism

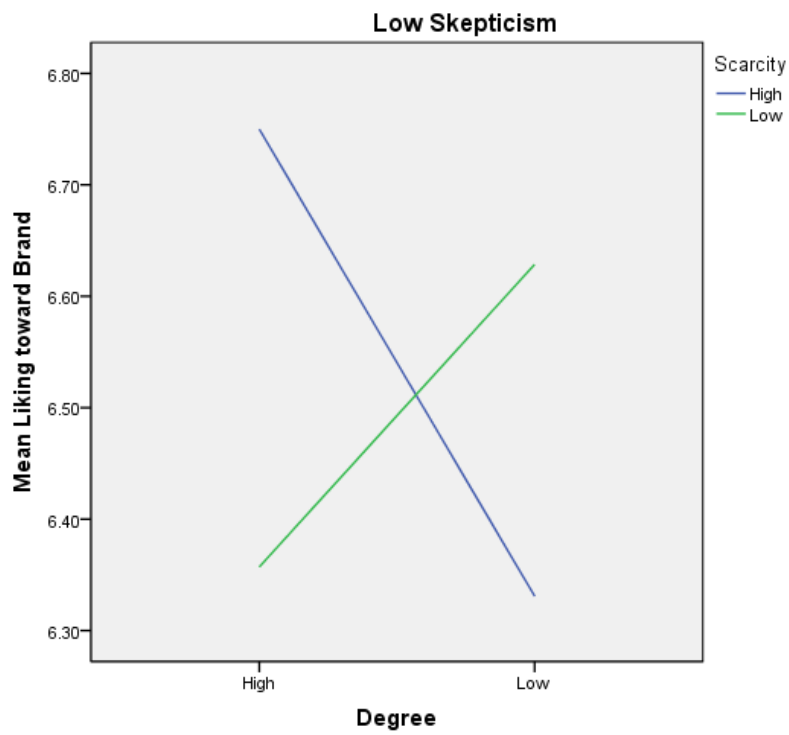
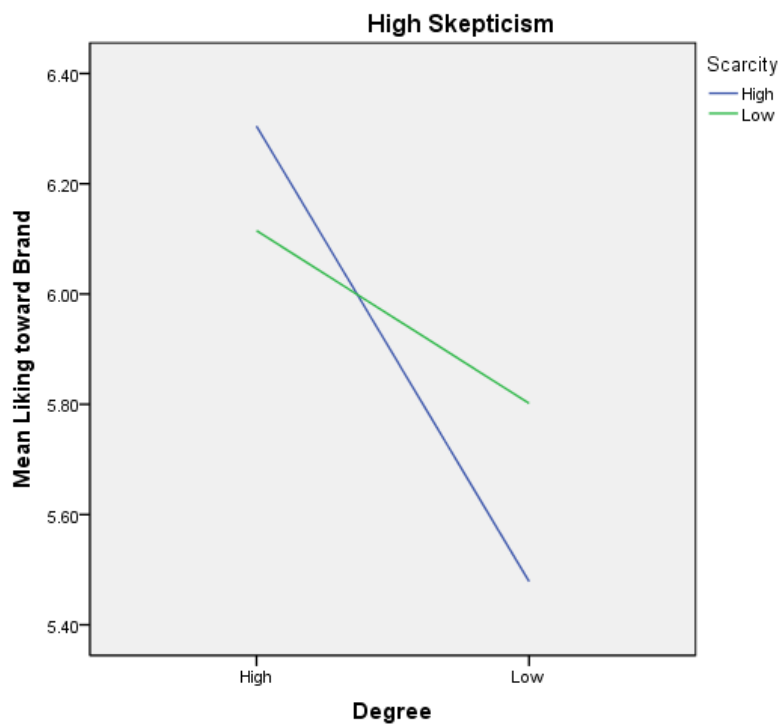


Figure 5.2: Mean liking toward a brand by degree, scarcity, and skepticism

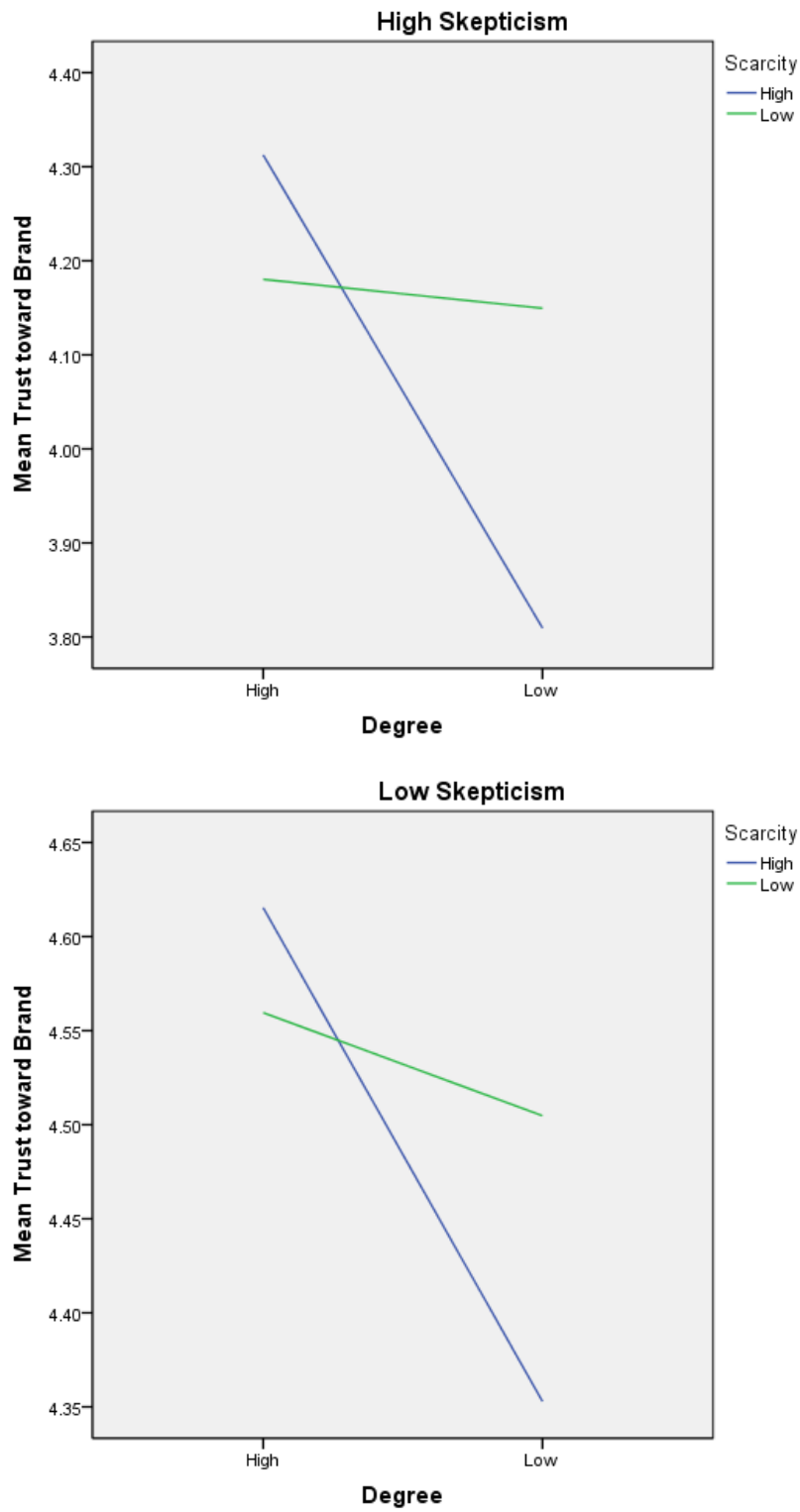


Figure 5.3: Mean trust toward a brand by degree, scarcity, and skepticism

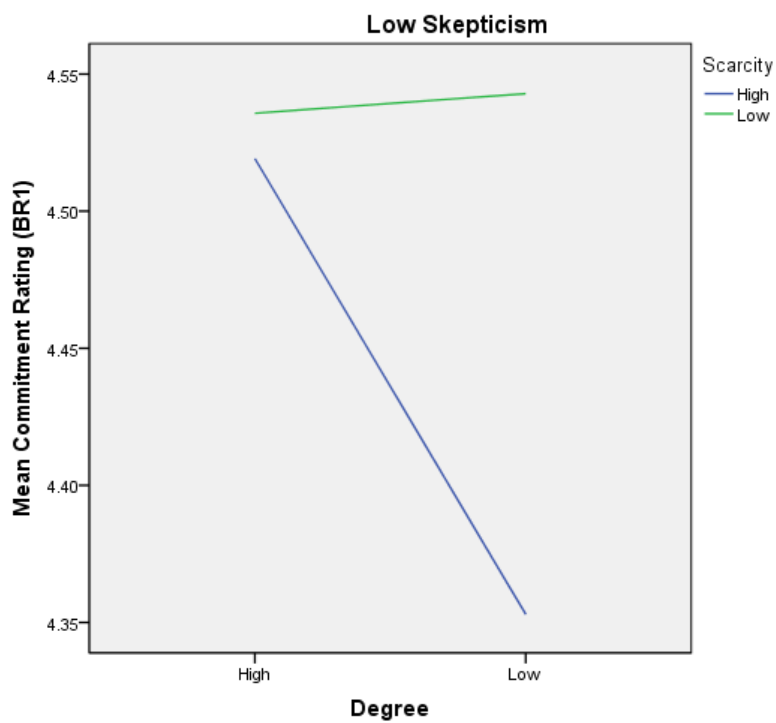
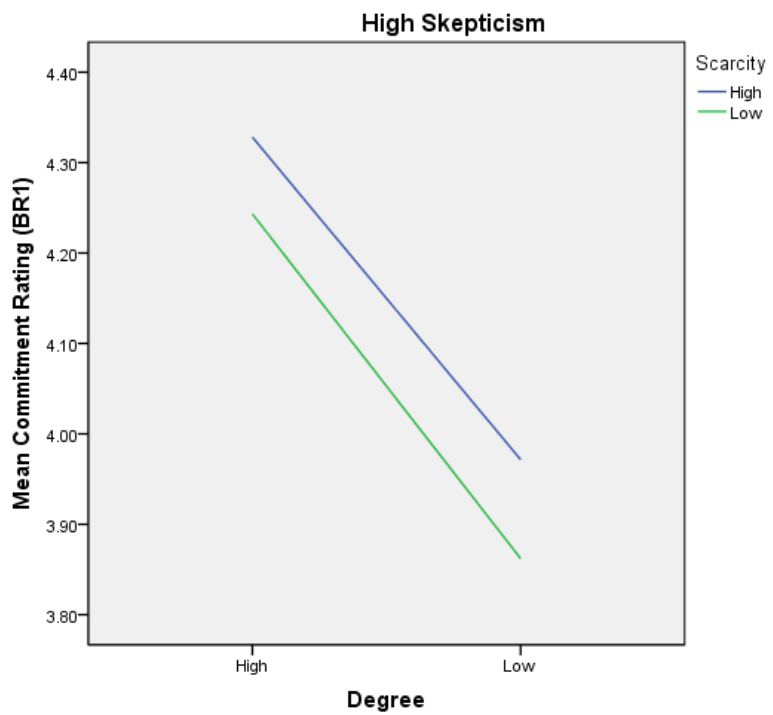


Figure 5.4: Mean commitment (BR1) rating by degree, scarcity, and skepticism

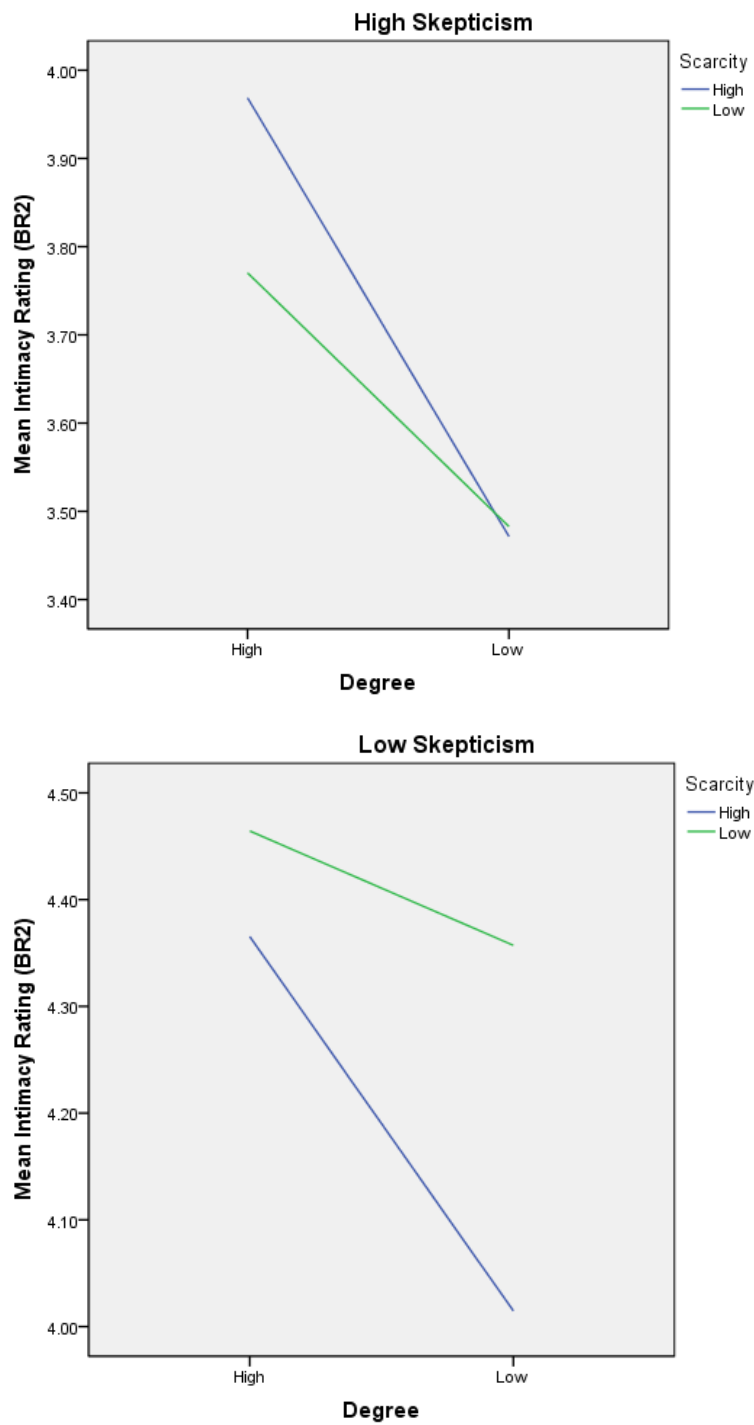


Figure 5.5: Mean intimacy (BR2) rating by degree, scarcity, and skepticism

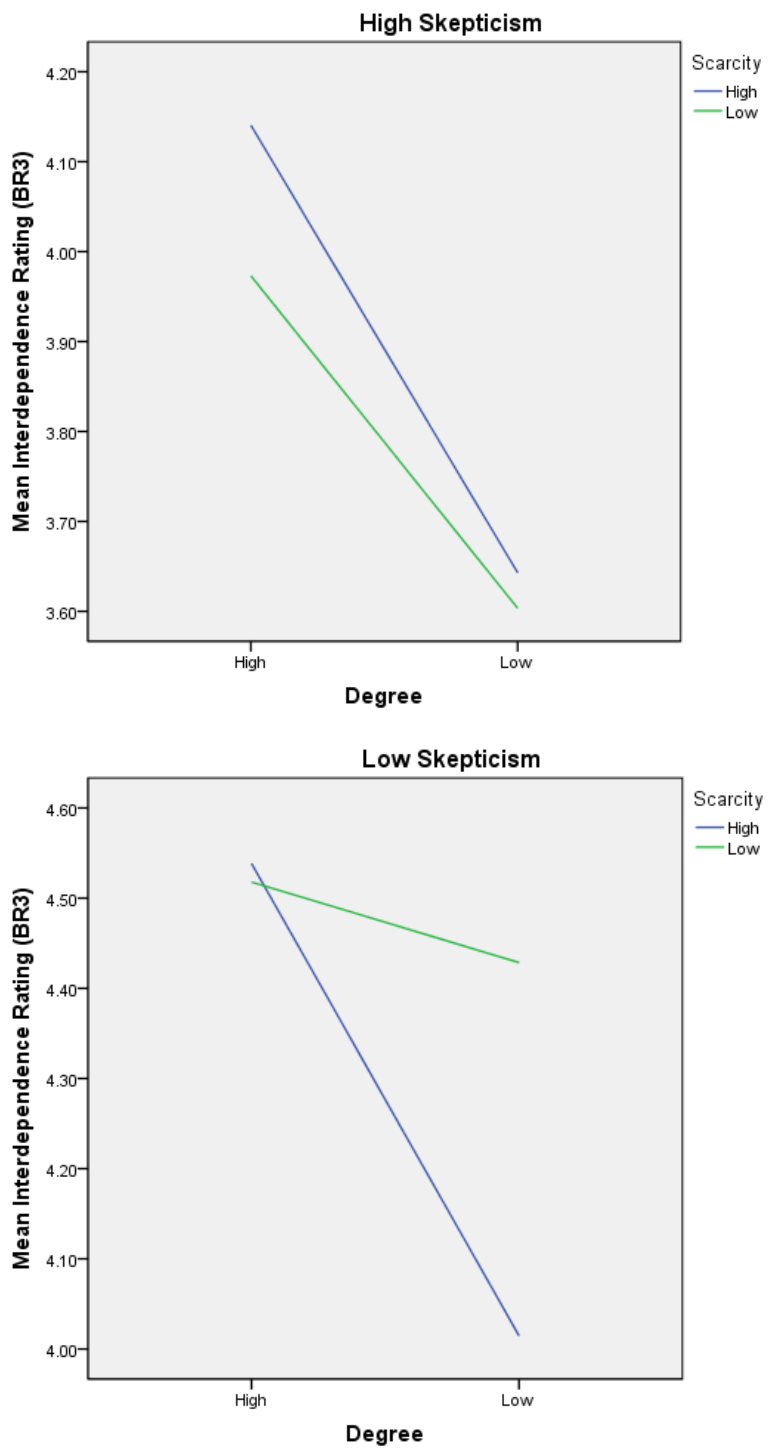


Figure 5.6: Mean interdependence (BR3) rating by degree, scarcity, and skepticism

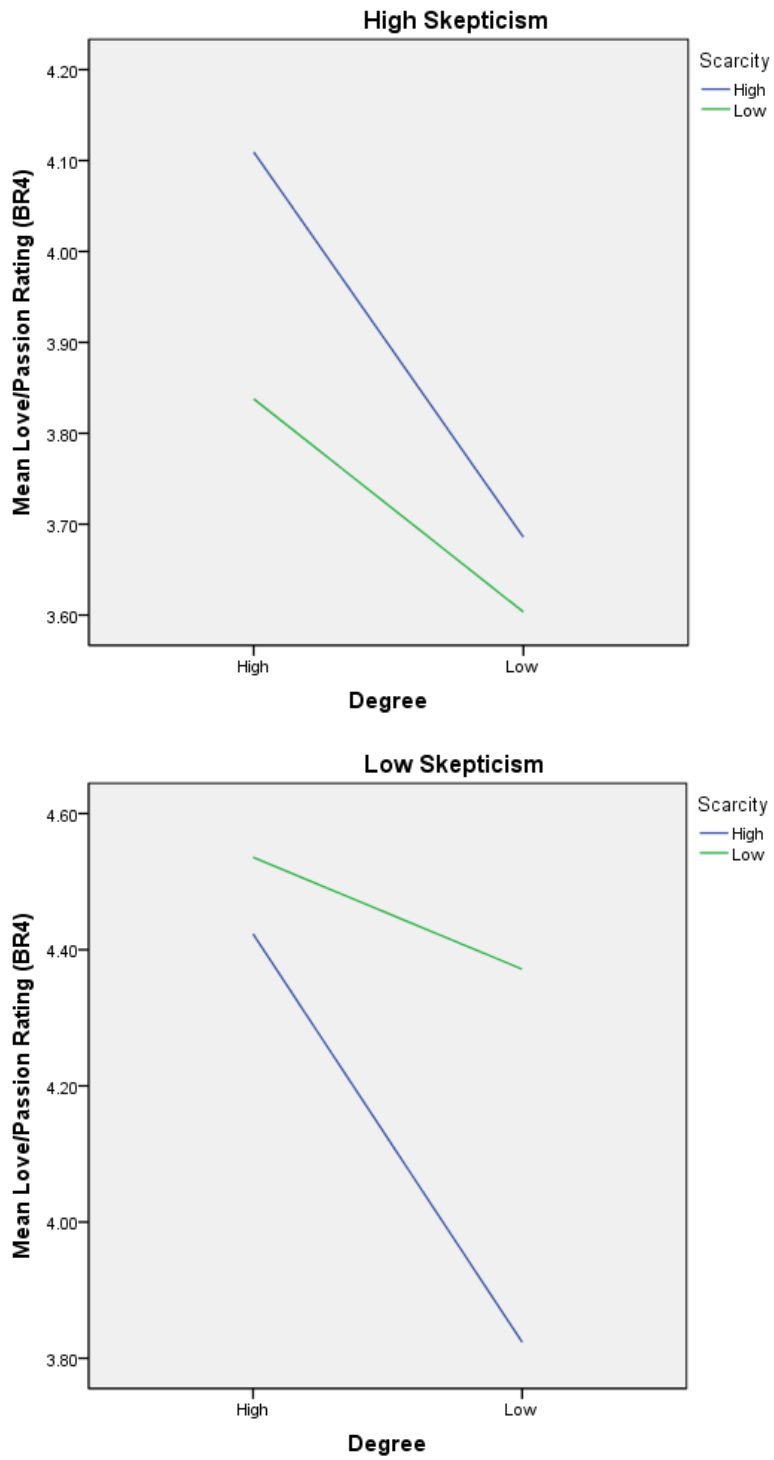


Figure 5.7: Mean love/passion (BR4) rating by degree, scarcity, and skepticism

Additional Analysis

For exploratory purposes, a univariate ANOVA was performed on Purchase Intention for Degree, Scarcity, Skepticism, and their two- and three-way interactions. The main effect for Degree was significant, $F(1,248) = 10.15, p < .01$. Participants in the high degree of disclosure condition reported greater purchase intent (5.94) than did participants in the low degree of disclosure condition (5.28). In addition, the main effect for Skepticism was significant, $F(1,248) = 37.11, p < .001$. Participants in the low skepticism condition reported greater purchase intent (6.24) than did participants in the high skepticism condition (4.98). High scarcity participants did not express significantly greater purchase intent (5.51) than did low scarcity participants (5.71), $F(1,248) = .95, p = .331$. The Degree x Scarcity interaction was not significant, $F(1,248) = .00, p = .975$, nor was the Degree x Skepticism interaction, $F(1,248) = 1.85, p = .176$, the Scarcity x Skepticism interaction, $F(1,248) = .04, p = .832$, or the Degree x Scarcity x Skepticism interaction, $F(1,248) = .01, p = .938$.

Also for exploratory purposes, a linear regression analysis was performed with the outcome variable Purchase Intention and the predictor variables Degree, Scarcity, Skepticism, and the seven dependent variables. The analysis was significant, $F(10,245) = 12.92, p < .001$, with an adjusted R^2 of .32. The five factors that uniquely predicted purchase intent to a significant or marginally significant extent were Degree, $\beta = -.094, t = -1.75, p = .081$; Skepticism, $\beta = .200, t = 3.52, p < .001$; Liking, $\beta = .140, t = 1.85, p = .066$; Commitment, $\beta = .149, t = 1.68, p = .094$; and Interdependence, $\beta = .188, t = 2.00, p < .05$. These results revealed that greater purchase intention was associated with a greater degree of disclosure, lower skepticism, greater liking toward the brand, and greater consumer-brand relationship quality (i.e., commitment, brand interdependence).

D.V.		Hypothesis	Results
Intimacy toward the brand	1a	The greater the degree of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel intimacy toward the brand.	Supported
	2a	The higher the scarcity of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel intimacy toward the brand.	Not Supported
	3a	The effect of the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure on intimacy toward the brand will vary according to the consumers' advertising skepticism level.	Skepticism main effect Disclosure X Scarcity Interaction effect
Liking toward the brand	2a	The greater the degree of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel liking toward the brand.	Supported
	2b	The higher the scarcity of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel liking toward the brand.	Not Supported
	2c	The effect of the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure on liking toward the brand will vary according to the consumers' advertising skepticism level.	Skepticism main effect Disclosure X Scarcity Disclosure X Skepticism
Trust toward the brand	1a	The greater the degree of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel trust toward the brand.	Supported
	2a	The higher the scarcity of brand information disclosure, the stronger consumers feel trust toward the brand.	Not Supported
	3a	The effect of the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure on trust toward the brand will vary according to the consumers' advertising skepticism level.	Skepticism main effect Disclosure X Scarcity
Consumer-Brand Relationship	1d	The greater the degree of brand information disclosure, the higher consumers have brand-relationship quality.	Supported
	2d	The higher the scarcity of brand information disclosure, the higher consumers have brand-relationship quality.	Not Supported
	3d	The effect of the degree and the scarcity of brand information disclosure on consumer-brand relationship will vary according to the consumers' advertising skepticism level.	Skepticism main effect

Table 5.7: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

The previous chapter presented the results for both the pre-test and the main study. It focused on the quantitative results and illustrated how each hypothesis was either supported or not. This chapter concludes this discourse by discussing those results in light of the original research questions. In so doing it acknowledges the existing limitations with this dissertation study, includes a perspective on how to strengthen future analysis, and acknowledges the study's contributions to the discipline and managerial implications.

This dissertation investigated the influence of brand information disclosure through social media on consumer evaluation of a brand. Specifically, this study explored how the degree and scarcity of information disclosure influenced consumers' intimacy, liking, and trust toward a brand as well as the consumer-brand relationship. Furthermore, the study investigated the moderating role of consumers' advertising skepticism on their brand evaluations. By adapting self-disclosure theories and front/backstage conceptualizations to the consumer-brand relationship context, this research aimed to answer the following three research questions:

RQ1: How does the degree of brand information disclosure (i.e., perceived backstage visibility) via social media influence consumer responses toward a brand?

RQ2: How does the scarcity of brand information disclosure via social media influence consumer responses toward a brand?

RQ3: Does the consumer's general advertising skepticism moderate the impact of disclosure of a brand's behind-the-scenes information?

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: How does the degree of brand information disclosure (i.e., perceived backstage visibility) via social media influence consumer responses toward a brand?

In line with the predictions, the results showed that subjects exhibited enhanced relational outcomes such as greater intimacy, liking, and trust toward the brand when there was greater brand information disclosure. The results revealed significant main effects for degree of information disclosure on intimacy toward the brand (H1a), liking toward the brand (H2a), and trust toward the brand (H3a). Consumers in the high degree of disclosure condition felt greater intimacy, liking, and trust toward the brand than did consumers in the low disclosure condition. The results may be interpreted as follows: When consumers perceived a higher degree of information disclosure by recognizing the perceived backstage story of the brand in addition to its frontstage counterpart, they were more likely to evaluate the brand in more intimate, favorable, and trustable terms than when they perceived a lower degree of information disclosure by merely seeing the frontstage of the brand.

Furthermore, the results of current investigation evidenced that the quality of consumer-brand relationship can become stronger depending upon the degree of brand information disclosure. The results identified a significant main effect of degree of information disclosure on indicators of the consumer-brand relationship (H1d) such as commitment, intimacy, interdependence, and love/passion. Consumers felt significantly stronger consumer-brand relationship quality when a higher degree of information disclosure was available.

RQ2: How does the scarcity of brand information disclosure via social media influence consumer responses toward a brand?

The study predicted that subjects in the high scarcity of information disclosure condition would feel more intimacy (H1b), liking (H2b), and trust (H3b) toward the brand than in the low scarcity condition. The results showed that these hypotheses are supported only in particular situations. Significant interaction effects of degree and scarcity were detected across proposed relational outcomes. In particular, consumers in the high degree/high scarcity condition reported greater intimacy, liking, and trust toward the brand than did consumers in other conditions. It was noteworthy that consumers exhibited the lowest intimacy, liking, and trust in the low degree/high scarcity condition. Thus, the results may be interpreted as follows: When a brand offered a higher degree of information disclosure in an exclusive manner, consumers felt the strongest liking toward the brand. In contrast, when a brand disclosed a lower degree of information in an exclusive way, consumers felt the least liking toward the brand. This finding suggests that there may be a potential backlash of the scarcity of disclosure in situations where the information is perceived as the very basic information that a business usually makes available to consumers. That is, when the information contains a relatively lower degree of disclosure, such as frontstage information, making the information exclusive is not effective for generating positive consumer responses.

One possible reason for failure to detect a main effect of scarcity relates to the characteristics of the social media used. It is conceivable that the subjects comprehended social media as more open platforms than other media environments. Since social media or Web 2.0 are a collection of new internet applications that emphasize user participation, connectivity, user-generation, information sharing, and collaboration (Henderson and

Bowley 2010), subjects may have perceived scarcity involving exclusive information sharing as unremarkable for a social media environment. Nonetheless, the results of the study suggest that scarcity of information can be an effective communication strategy to build a strong connection with consumers when the brand discloses particularly unique and rare information about the brand.

RQ3: Does the consumer's general advertising skepticism moderate the impact of disclosure of a brand's behind-the-scenes information?

A significant interactive effect between degree and skepticism was detected for consumers' liking toward the brand. Subjects in the high degree/low skepticism condition showed the strongest liking toward the brand, followed by those in the low degree/low skepticism condition, high degree/high skepticism condition, and low degree/high skepticism condition. This finding can be interpreted as follows: The relatively highly skeptical consumers tended to feel significantly stronger liking toward the brand when they perceived higher disclosure of the brand compared to when they perceived lower disclosure. On the other hand, the relatively less skeptical consumers generally liked the brand more than the highly skeptical consumers. In addition, while these less skeptical consumers evaluated the high degree of information disclosure more positively than the low degree of disclosure, the difference in their liking toward the brand in the low degree disclosure and high degree disclosure conditions was smaller than for the highly skeptical consumers. Thus, the highly skeptical consumers demonstrated a more sensitive response toward the degree of information disclosure than the less skeptical consumers.

Another interesting and unexpected finding in this study was the significant main effect of consumer skepticism across various relational outcomes such as intimacy, liking, trust, and the four indicators of consumer-brand relationship. Consumers who had more disbelief toward advertising claims in general were less likely to feel intimacy, liking, and trust toward the brand than consumers who had less disbelief toward advertising claims.

Overall, the findings from the current study illustrate that degree of brand information disclosure is a significant influencer on consumers' brand evaluations and consumer-brand relationship quality in a social media environment. In addition, findings highlighted the influential role of the scarcity of information disclosure, depending upon the degree of information disclosure. Moreover, the findings evidenced how the consumer's general advertising skepticism can play a significant role when consumers are exposed to information from the brand via social media.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Theoretical Contributions

Based on the findings from this dissertation research, several theoretical contributions are evident. The foremost theoretical contribution of this dissertation research is that of adapting theories of self-disclosure to a highly relevant consumer-brand relationship context. As the consumer-brand relationship paradigm suggests, the relationship between consumers and brands is similar to that of human relationships (Fournier 1998). Accordingly, consumers often form relationships with brands in much the same way as they do with other human beings in a social context (Aggarwal 2004). The findings of the current investigation extend previous consumer-brand relationship

research by suggesting the existence of relationships between consumers and brands in newly emergent social media environments. More importantly, by adopting self-disclosure theories from interpersonal contexts, this dissertation proposed a significant role of brand information disclosure in enhancing consumer evaluation and building a stronger consumer-brand relationship.

In doing so, one of the biggest contributions of this dissertation research is that it sheds light on the degree of information disclosure in the consumer-brand relationship context. As previous studies suggested, relational outcomes of self-disclosure vary depending upon the degree of self-disclosure (Altman and Taylor 1973; Journauld 1971; Pearce and Sharp 1973; Wheelless 1976). In this theoretical light, this dissertation study proposed consideration of the perceived backstage of a brand as the more personal and intimate aspects of the brand. By adopting the frontstage/perceived backstage conceptualization from the highly relevant service marketing context (Grayson 1998), the current dissertation study attempted to elucidate different degrees of brand information disclosure. This results of this dissertation study echo the findings of previous self-disclosure research in the interpersonal relationship field that information receivers would show greater intimacy (e.g., Altman and Taylor 1973; Reis and Shaver 1988), liking (e.g., Chaikin and Delega 1974; Chelune 1972), and trust (e.g., Pederson and Higbee 1969; Wheelless and Grotz 1977) toward a discloser who presents more personal and intimate information. That is, when consumers perceive a higher degree of information disclosure by recognizing the perceived backstage of the brand in addition to its frontstage counterpart, they are more likely to evaluate the brand in more intimate, favorable, and trustworthy terms than when they perceive a lower degree of information disclosure from merely seeing the frontstage of the brand.

Another noteworthy theoretical contribution is that the current dissertation study highlights the impact of information scarcity in the consumer-brand relationship context. Previous self-disclosure studies reported a scarcity effect of self-disclosure (Derelega and Grezelak 1979; Petty and Mirels 1981), suggesting that being selected as the recipient of a scarce message leads to having a more positive evaluation of the discloser (e.g., Archer and Cook 1986). The findings of this study support previous such arguments by showing that the relational outcomes of brand information disclosure were maximized when the disclosing information was only available to selected consumers rather than when the disclosing information was available to a public audience. Furthermore, the current investigation extended our understanding of scarcity in self-disclosure by demonstrating that scarcity of information disclosure is effective only when the disclosing information is perceived as highly personal and intimate.

Lastly, the results suggest a caveat to previous findings on consumer skepticism toward advertising. As Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) evidenced, the notion that more skeptical consumers evaluate advertising claims more negatively than less skeptical consumers was also observed in this study. More skeptical consumers are less likely to feel intimacy, liking, and trust toward a brand than less skeptical consumers are toward the same information disclosure from a brand.

In sum, the findings of this dissertation study not only substantiate previous findings on the impact of self-disclosure, but also extend the literature by demonstrating the effectiveness of degree and scarcity of self-disclosure as well as consumer skepticism in the context of consumer-brand relationships in a social media environment.

Managerial Implications

Overall, this dissertation research is one of the first attempts to examine the use of behind-the-scenes contents on social media sites to understand how advertisers can use this new platform more effectively. By contributing to the limited research available, this research allows advertiser to examine and understand the implications and effectiveness of information disclosure on social media.

This dissertation research offers several practical implications for social media marketers who struggle to attract prospects and retain fans. In particular, as evidenced by the findings of this study, social media content could enhance consumer-brand relationship quality in a more positive direction by providing perceived backstage brand information. In particular, findings from the current study suggest that the brand needs to be more transparent and authentic in a social media environment to be more intimate, likable, and trustable. To improve the effects of marketing communication efforts via social media, the most important recommendation this research provides is to actively disclose behind-the-scenes information about a brand. Consumers feel closer to the brand and like it more when the brand discloses information about itself and its business activities.

Secondly, this study highlights the effectiveness of scarcity of information disclosure when the information contains exceptional content. Given that the characteristics of social media are comparatively open to the public and easy to access, making information access limited is not recommendable in today's "open" media landscape. However, in particular, when the information contains more than basic content that discloses an in-depth look into a brand, making this information scarce could be an effective strategy. Therefore, marketers should use the exclusivity of information for such goals.

Lastly, as evidenced in this study, consumer skepticism is a strong predictor that may influence marketing communication campaigns via social media. Even though social media are generally not perceived as advertising, skeptical consumers may maintain their skepticism toward any information that may be generated by a brand.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with most discovery-based investigations, several limitations are associated with this dissertation study. First, this study examined the impact of perceived backstage information using a single product category and a single social media platform (i.e., a corporate blog). Further research with a larger set of brands across different product/service categories is needed to expand the generalizability of the findings. In addition, future research should explore the effects of brand information disclosure on the internet beyond corporate blog platforms.

Second, as does most experimental research, this study uses only fictitious brands as stimuli. Therefore, this dissertation study must accept reduced external validity to ensure internal validity. In particular, the consumer-brand relationship took place in a hypothetical context using a fictitious brand. To evaluate the predictions in the study more fully, future research should be conducted in real-world contexts.

Another limitation involved the use of an online experiment. Participants in this online experiment were simply seeking rewards from the online panel company. Therefore, there are methodological concerns about the internal and external validity of the results. However, this study excluded all participants who did not take the online experiment within the designated time period and subjects who did not perceive the stimuli as intended. In addition, the study provided a unique opportunity to study an understudied area of the discipline. Therefore, the researcher believes that the potential

benefits of the study outweigh validity concerns. Further research should explore the disclosure of perceived backstage information about the brand by employing different methods such as survey or content analysis.


Lastly, due to the exploratory nature of this study, the findings are somewhat limited in their ability to help us fully understand how the disclosure of brand information can systemically influence various consumer behaviors. Based on the current findings, future research should propose and test a more comprehensive theoretical model to explain consumers' responses toward information disclosure from brands.

Further experiments should be conducted to compare consumers who have a shallow brand relationship to those who have a strong brand relationship. It may be also worthwhile to investigate the effects of social media content as an advertising vehicle. Because social media contents are under the control of marketers, the characteristics of social media content and advertising are similar except the budget for buying media spots. Thus, exploring the effect of social media content on brand attitude and purchase intention would be another meaningful step for future research.

Appendix A: Stimuli for Main Study

1. HIGH DEGREE/LOW SCARCITY CONDITION


Your Favorite Iced Coffee



We have exciting news for all of our coffee fans! You can now turn any break into a sweet escape with our summer special – Mike's Iced Coffee. Freshly brewed and full of flavor, Mike's iced coffee is the perfect pick-me-up anytime of the day or night - giving you the energy you need to keep on going. And, while our iced coffee can be customized with your favorite flavors, it always has its signature smooth taste.


We can hardly think of anything more refreshing than this delicious blend of our iced coffee. With its delightful balance of fresh citrus flavors and rich caramel notes, this icy beverage is a sure thing on a summer's day!

What is our secret to making Mike's Iced Coffee better than the rest? Here's the behind-the-scenes scoop of how our iced coffee is made.



Our barista Ben is making a cold-brewed coffee. The beginning of a 24-hour process for our iced coffee.

At Mike's Coffee, unlike most coffee shops, which sell you regular coffee that was chilled in the fridge, we **cold brew** our iced coffee. In the past, iced coffee simply meant "hot coffee made cold." But, that often led to a watered-down or sharp and acerbic taste. At Mike's Coffee, we use a method called "cold-brew".



A look behind-the-scenes. Our specially-designed cold-brew toddy inside the kitchen.

Baristas at Mike's Coffee use a specially-designed cold-brew toddy to transform many pounds of coffee into a super-strong concentrate. We mix the concentrate with equal part fresh cold water according to the water-concentrate ratio considered optimal for each type of coffee beans. The process takes 24 hours to complete and produces a terrific smooth flavor that you can't get by icing down hot-brewed coffee!

As you know, Mike's blog is accessible only to our fans who are invited to join. We don't publish our blog postings here publicly because we want to maintain its exclusivity and share our behind-the-scenes stories only with our fans!

Posted by Mike's Coffee at 6:07 PM

Your Favorite Iced Coffee



We have exciting news for all of our coffee fans! You can now turn any break into a sweet escape with our summer special – Mike’s Iced Coffee. Freshly brewed and full of flavor, Mike’s iced coffee is the perfect pick-me-up anytime of the day or night - giving you the energy you need to keep on going. And, while our iced coffee can be customized with your favorite flavors, it always has its signature smooth taste.

We can hardly think of anything more refreshing than this delicious blend of our iced coffee. With its delightful balance of fresh citrus flavors and rich caramel notes, this icy beverage is a sure thing on a summer’s day!

What is our secret to making Mike’s Iced Coffee better than the rest? Here's the behind-the-scene scoop of how our iced coffee is made.



Our barista Ben is making a cold-brewed coffee. The beginning of a 24-hour process for our iced coffee.

At Mike's Coffee, unlike most coffee shops, which sell you regular coffee that was chilled in the fridge, we cold brew our iced coffee. In the past, iced coffee simply meant “hot coffee made cold.” But, that often led to a watered-down or sharp and acerbic taste. At Mike’s Coffee, we use a method called “cold-brew”.



A look behind-the-scene.

Our specially-designed cold-brew toddy inside the kitchen.

Baristas at Mike’s Coffee use a specially-designed cold-brew toddy to transform many pounds of coffee into a super-strong concentrate. We mix the concentrate with equal part fresh cold water according to the water-concentrate ratio considered optimal for each type of coffee beans. The process takes 24 hours to complete and produces a terrific smooth flavor that you can’t get by icing down hot-brewed coffee!

As you know, Mike's Coffee blog is open to everyone. We publish our blog postings here in many other websites as well because we want to share our behind-the-scene stories with everyone!

2. LOW DEGREE/LOW SCARCITY CONDITION

Your Favorite Iced Coffee



We have exciting news for all of our coffee fans! You can now turn any break into a sweet escape with our summer special – Mike's Iced Coffee. Freshly brewed and full of flavor, Mike's iced coffee is the perfect pick-me-up anytime of the day or night - giving you the energy you need to keep on going. And, while our iced coffee can be customized with your favorite flavors, it always has its signature smooth taste.

We can hardly think of anything more refreshing than this delicious blend of our iced coffee. With its delightful balance of fresh citrus flavors and rich caramel notes, this icy beverage is a sure thing on a summer's day!

As you know, Mike's Coffee blog is open to everyone. We publish our blog postings here in many other websites as well because we want to share our news with everyone!

Posted by Mike's Coffee at 5:53 PM

3. HIGH DEGREE/HIGH SCARCITY CONDITION

Your Favorite Iced Coffee



We have exciting news for all of our coffee fans! You can now turn any break into a sweet escape with our summer special – Mike's Iced Coffee. Freshly brewed and full of flavor, Mike's iced coffee is the perfect pick-me-up anytime of the day or night - giving you the energy you need to keep on going. And, while our iced coffee can be customized with your favorite flavors, it always has its signature smooth taste.

We can hardly think of anything more refreshing than this delicious blend of our iced coffee. With its delightful balance of fresh citrus flavors and rich caramel notes, this icy beverage is a sure thing on a summer's day!

What is our secret to making Mike's Iced Coffee better than the rest? Here's the behind-the-scenes scoop of how our iced coffee is made.



Our barista Ben is making a cold-brewed coffee.
The beginning of a 24-hour process for our iced coffee.

At Mike's Coffee, unlike most coffee shops, which sell you regular coffee that was chilled in the fridge, we **cold brew** our iced coffee. In the past, iced coffee simply meant "hot coffee made cold." But, that often led to a watered-down or sharp and acerbic taste. At Mike's Coffee, we use a method called "cold-brew".



A look behind-the-scenes.
Our specially-designed cold-brew toddy inside the kitchen.

Baristas at Mike's Coffee use a specially-designed cold-brew toddy to transform many pounds of coffee into a super-strong concentrate. We mix the concentrate with equal part fresh cold water according to the water-concentrate ratio considered optimal for each type of coffee beans. The process takes 24 hours to complete and produces a terrific smooth flavor that you can't get by icing down hot-brewed coffee!

As you know, Mike's Coffee blog is open to everyone. We publish our blog postings here in many other websites as well because we want to share our behind-the-scenes stories with everyone!

Posted by Mike's Coffee at 3:23 PM

Your Favorite Iced Coffee



We have exciting news for all of our coffee fans! You can now turn any break into a sweet escape with our summer special – Mike’s Iced Coffee. Freshly brewed and full of flavor, Mike’s iced coffee is the perfect pick-me-up anytime of the day or night - giving you the energy you need to keep on going. And, while our iced coffee can be customized with your favorite flavors, it always has its signature smooth taste.

We can hardly think of anything more refreshing than this delicious blend of our iced coffee. With its delightful balance of fresh citrus flavors and rich caramel notes, this icy beverage is a sure thing on a summer’s day!

What is our secret to making Mike’s Iced Coffee better than the rest? Here’s the behind-the-scene scoop of how our iced coffee is made.



Our barista Ben is making a cold-brewed coffee.
The beginning of a 24-hour process for our iced coffee.

At Mike's Coffee, unlike most coffee shops, which sell you regular coffee that was chilled in the fridge, we cold brew our iced coffee. In the past, iced coffee simply meant “hot coffee made cold.” But, that often led to a watered-down or sharp and acerbic taste. At Mike’s Coffee, we use a method called “cold-brew”.



A look behind-the-scene.
Our specially-designed cold-brew toddy inside the kitchen.

Baristas at Mike’s Coffee use a specially-designed cold-brew toddy to transform many pounds of coffee into a super-strong concentrate. We mix the concentrate with equal part fresh cold water according to the water-concentrate ratio considered optimal for each type of coffee beans. The process takes 24 hours to complete and produces a terrific smooth flavor that you can’t get by icing down hot-brewed coffee!

As you know, Mike’s blog is accessible only to our fans who are invited to join. We don't publish our blog postings here publicly because we want to maintain its exclusivity and share our behind-the-scene stories only with our fans!

4. LOW DEGREE/HIGH SCARCITY CONDITION

Your Favorite Iced Coffee



We have exciting news for all of our coffee fans! You can now turn any break into a sweet escape with our summer special – Mike's Iced Coffee. Freshly brewed and full of flavor, Mike's iced coffee is the perfect pick-me-up anytime of the day or night - giving you the energy you need to keep on going. And, while our iced coffee can be customized with your favorite flavors, it always has its signature smooth taste.

We can hardly think of anything more refreshing than this delicious blend of our iced coffee. With its delightful balance of fresh citrus flavors and rich caramel notes, this icy beverage is a sure thing on a summer's day!

As you know, Mike's Coffee blog is accessible only to our fans who are invited to join. We don't publish our blog postings here publicly because we want to maintain its exclusivity and share our news only with our fans!

Posted by Mike's Coffee at 3:27 PM

Appendix B: Questionnaires

Q1

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Thank you for participating in this survey. The purpose of this study is to understand your opinions on consumer related issues. All of your responses throughout the study will be completely confidential. The questionnaire that you are asked to fill out will help researchers understand general attitudes and perceptions held by consumers. This online survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time to complete.

The risks in participating in this study are no greater than everyday life. Extreme care will be taken to ensure confidentiality of participants' responses. No identifiers will be collected and therefore there will be no way to associate responses with participants. No personal information of participants will be used for data analysis; and the researcher will not attempt to link participants' responses to their identities. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

Please feel free to contact the investigator, Jay Moon, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Advertising at the University of Texas at Austin, at (213) 675-2810, unpluggedsoul@gmail.com, with any concerns or questions you might have about this survey.

The records of this survey will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. If you have questions, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation, contact the investigator conducting the study. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

If you have read the above information and agree to participate in this survey, please indicate your voluntary consent by clicking on the ">>" button below and proceeding to the survey.

Q2

The following is a hypothetical scenario that may be experienced by someone like you. Please read the scenario on the next page carefully and **think of yourself as the person in this scenario.**

Q3

Mike's Coffee is located a few blocks from where you live. You go there regularly both on weekdays as well as weekends. You enjoy going there – the coffee is great, the place is cozy and the people are fun. You feel special there, not just any regular customer. They understand what you need and make extra effort to fulfill it. Sometimes when you don't go there for a while, you start to miss them. And the feeling must be mutual since they also give you a big welcome back. You like them and care about them as much as they seem to care about you. It would be a sad day if they were ever to close the place down. You have been going there for so long that they feel like family to you. Their prices are a bit above the average, but their interaction with you is beyond just money. Each time you visit Mike's Coffee, you appreciate them even more.

You can't come back to this page once you leave. Please make sure that you thoroughly read the scenario before you go to the next page.

Q4

Given the scenario you just read, please tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I can imagine that I am very loyal to Mike's Coffee.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that I would stick to Mike's Coffee even if it lets me down once.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that if Mike's Coffee were a person, we would be close friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that if Mike's Coffee were a person, I would trust it with confidential information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that I feel like something is missing when I don't visit Mike's Coffee for a while.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that Mike's Coffee plays an important role in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that if Mike's Coffee were a person, I would have intensive feelings toward it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that no other coffee shop can quite take the place of Mike's Coffee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5

Now, we would like you to visit Mike's Coffee blog, where Mike's Coffee communicates with their customers on a variety of topics.

On the next page, a blog posting about Mike's Coffee's Iced coffee will be presented. Please read it carefully. We will ask for your feedback afterwards.

Q6

Your Favorite Iced Coffee



We have exciting news for all of our coffee fans! You can now turn any break into a sweet escape with our summer special – Mike's Iced Coffee. Freshly brewed and full of flavor, Mike's iced coffee is the perfect pick-me-up anytime of the day or night - giving you the energy you need to keep on going. And, while our iced coffee can be customized with your favorite flavors, it always has its signature smooth taste.

We can hardly think of anything more refreshing than this delicious blend of our iced coffee. With its delightful balance of fresh citrus flavors and rich caramel notes, this icy beverage is a sure thing on a summer's day!

As you know, Mike's Coffee blog is open to everyone. We publish our blog postings here in many other websites as well because we want to share our news with everyone!

Posted by Mike's Coffee at 5:53 PM

Q7

About the blog posting you just read,

would you say that it provides...

- ☐ the very basic information that a business usually makes available to consumers
- ☐ more than the basic information that a business usually makes available to consumers
- ☐ less than the basic information that a business usually makes available to consumers

Q8

would you say that it is...

- ☐ open to everyone
- ☐ is exclusively available to their fans who are invited to join the blog

Q9

Based on the **blog posting** you just read, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
The blog posting gives out behind-the-scenes information about Mike's Coffee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The blog posting reveals something about Mike's Coffee that is not well known	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can't be sure that everything I read on Mike's Coffee blog describes things the way they really are	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The blog posting does not show Mike's Coffee as it really is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The blog posting provides information that is rarely revealed to the public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The blog posting provides us consumers with the inside scoop of Mike's Coffee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The blog posting lets me see what happens in Mike's Coffee as if I were really there	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The blog posting lets me really see how Mike's Coffee does their business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10

We would like you to **list the thoughts that you had as you read the blog posting**. Please try to recall as many of your thoughts as possible.

When you type them in the box below, please separate one thought from the next with a comma. Keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer.

Q11 The following is a series of adjectives that describes how you may **feel about the blog posting** that you just read. Please tell us how you feel by checking the appropriate button.

Q12 **The blog posting that I just read is...**

Bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Good
Likable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not Likable
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant
Not fun to read	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Fun to read
Not enjoyable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enjoyable
Not entertaining	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Entertaining
Believable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not believable
Not true	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	True
Acceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not Acceptable
Not credible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Credible

Q13

For the rest of this survey, we'd like you to continue to think of yourself as the person described in the scenario at the beginning.

As a customer of Mike's Coffee and having just read a blog posting about the iced coffee, please continue onto the next set of questions.

Q14 Now we would like to know how you may **feel about Mike's Coffee**. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

Q15 1.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Mike's Coffee gives me a feeling of trust	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mike's Coffee likes to talk with people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mike's Coffee tries to establish a personal relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mike's Coffee treats me like just a customer rather than a person with specific needs and desires	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mike's Coffee used their experience to support their points in the blog posting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mike's Coffee talked about business' private information in the blog posting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have trust in Mike's Coffee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mike's Coffee referred to themselves many times in the blog posting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like Mike's Coffee as a person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mike's Coffee gives me a trustworthy impression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16

Overall, Mike's Coffee is..

Bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Good
Likable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not Likable
Unfavorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Favorable
Unsatisfactory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Satisfactory
Positive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Negative
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant
Unfriendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Friendly
Unkind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Kind
Not helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Helpful

Q18

How likely/unlikely would you be to leave your feedback on Mike's Coffee's blog?

Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Likely
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Probable
Impossible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Possible

Q19

How likely/unlikely would you be to visit Mike's Coffee?

Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Likely
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Probable
Impossible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Possible

Q20

How likely/unlikely would you be to purchase **Mike's iced coffee?**

Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Likely
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Probable
Impossible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Possible

Q21

Below are some statements about different consumer opinions. Please tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe advertising is informative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising is generally truthful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising is truth well told.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q23

Below are some opinions that people have about coffee in their lives. We would like to know what you think about them.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I am interested in coffee in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coffee is important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get involved with what coffee I drink	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coffee is relevant to my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am going to purchase coffee in the next six months	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q22 Please tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I can imagine that I am very loyal to Mike's Coffee.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that I would stick to Mike's Coffee even if it let me down once.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that if Mike's Coffee were a person, we would be close friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that if Mike's Coffee were a person, I would trust it with confidential information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that I feel like something is missing when I don't visit Mike's Coffee for a while.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that Mike's Coffee plays an important role in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that if Mike's Coffee were a person, I would have intensive feelings toward it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that no other coffee shop can quite take the place of Mike's Coffee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q24 In this final section, we need to ask you some questions about yourself. Please be assured that the information you provide will remain anonymous and will only be used for aggregation purpose. Your answers will never be linked to you personally.

Q25 Your gender is:

☐ Male

☐ Female

Q26 In which year were you born?

Q27 Your ethnicity is:

☐ White/Caucasian

☐ Black/African-American

☐ Hispanic/Latino

☐ Asian/Pacific Islander

☐ Other (please specify)

Q28

What is the highest level of education that you have completed thus far?

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ High school/GED
- ☐ Some college credit
- ☐ Associate degree (2-year college)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree (4-year college)
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree
- ☐ Professional degree (MD, JD)
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

Q29

Please check the category that best indicates your household income (before tax) in 2010:

- ☐ Under \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,000 to \$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 to 39,999
- ☐ \$40,000 to \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000 to \$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000 to \$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000 to \$89,999
- ☐ \$90,000 to \$99,999
- ☐ Over \$100,000
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q30

On an average weekday (M-F) , how many hours do you spend on social media (e.g., Facebook, blog, Twitter, YouTube, etc)?

- ☐ Less than 1 hour per day
- ☐ 1 to 1 hour and 59 minutes per day
- ☐ 2 to 2 hour and 59 minutes per day
- ☐ 3 to 3 hour and 59 minutes per day
- ☐ 4 to 4 hour and 59 minutes per day
- ☐ 5 hours or more; please specify

References

- Aaker, Jennifer, Susan Fournier, and S. Adam Brasel (2004), "When Good Brands Do Bad," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), 1-16.
- Aggarwal, Pankaj (2004), "The effects of brand relationship norms on consumer attitudes and behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), 87-101.
- Ahuja, Vandana and Yajulu Medury (2010), "Corporate blogs as e-CRM tools – Building consumer engagement through content management," *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 17, 91-105.
- Ajzen, Icek (1977), "Information processing approaches to interpersonal attraction," In S. W. Duck (Ed.), *Theory and practice in interpersonal attraction*, San Diego, CA: Academic Press
- Altman, Irwin and Dalmas A. Taylor (1973), *Social Penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships*. New York: Holt, Rinehard, & Winston.
- Andrade, Eduardo B., Velitchka Kaltcheva, and Barton Weitz (2002), "Self-disclosure on the web: the impact of privacy policy, reward, and company reputation", *Advances in Consumer Research*, 29 (1), 350-353.
- Andrews, J. Craig, Netemeyer, Richard and Srinivas Durvasula (1991), "Effect of Consumption Frequency on Believability and Attitude Towards Alcohol Warning Labels," *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 25(2), 323-338.
- Archer, Richard, L. and Christie E. Cook (1986), "Personalistic Self-Disclosure and Attraction: Basis for Relationship or Scar Resource," *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 49(3), 268-272.
- Arruda, Willam (2005), "Branding: All you need is love," Retrieved October 17, 2008, from <http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2005/1559/branding-all-you-need-is-love>
- Bane, Cynthia M.H. , Marilyn Cornish, Nicole Erspamer, and Lia Kampman (2010), "Self-Disclosure through Weblogs and Perceptions of Online and "Real-life" Friendships among Female Bloggers," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 13(2), 131-139.
- Bargh, John A., Katelyn Y. A. McKenna, and Grainne M. Fitzsimons (2002), "Can you see the real me? Activation and expression of the "true self" on the Internet," *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(1), 33-48.

- Bartholomew, Kim (1990), "Avoidance of Intimacy: An Attachment Perspective," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 7(2), 147-178.
- Beltramini, Richard (1982), "Advertising Perceived Believability Scale," *Proceedings of the Southwestern Marketing Association*, 1-3.
- Beltramini, Richard (1988), "Perceived Believability of Warning Label Information Presented in Cigarettes Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, 17(2), 26-32.
- Beltramini, Richard (1985), "Perceived Believability of Research Results Information in Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, 14(3), 18-24.
- Beltramini, Richard (1993), "Comprehension and Perceived Believability of Seals of Approval Information in Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, 22(3), 3-13.
- Berger, Charles R. and James J. Bradac (1982), *Language and social knowledge: Uncertainty in interpersonal relations*, London: Edward Arnold.
- Berg, John H. and M. S. Clark (1986), "Differences in Social Exchange between Intimate and Other Relationships: Gradually Evolving or Quickly Apparent?," in Derlega, V. J. and Winstead, B.A. (Eds.), *Friendship and Social Interaction* (101-128), New York: Springer.
- Burson-Marsteller (2010), "The global social media check-up 2010," Retrieved April 1, 2011 from http://www.burson-marsteller.com/Innovation_and_insights/blogs_and_podcasts/BM_Blog/Documents/Burson-Marsteller%202010%20Global%20Social%20Media%20Check-up%20white%20paper.pdf
- Blood, Rebecca (2002), "Weblogs: A history and perspective," In J. Rodzvilla (Ed.), *We've Got Blog: How Weblogs are Changing Our Culture* (p. 7-16), Cambridge MA: Perseus Publishing.
- Brehm, Sharon S., Rowland S. Miller, Daniel Perlman, and Susan Campbell (2002), *Intimate Relationship*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Brown, J., Amanda J. Broderick, and Nick Lee (2007), "Word of mouth communication within online communities: Conceptualizing the online social network," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 21(3), 2-20.
- Brown, Donald E. (1991), *Human Universals*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Bortree, Denise (2005), "Presentation of Self on the Web: An Ethnographic Study of Teenage Girls' Weblogs," *Education, Communication and Information*, 5(1), 25–39.
- Caldwell, John T. (2008), *Production culture*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Certner, Barry. C. (1973), "Exchange of self-disclosures in same-sexed groups of strangers," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 40(2), 292- 297.
- Chaikin, Alan L., Valerian Derlega, Benjamin Bayma, and Jacqueline Shaw (1975), "Neuroticism and Disclosure Reciprocity," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 43(1), 13-19.
- Chelune, Gordon J. (1975), "Self-disclosure: An elaboration of its basic dimensions," *Psychological Reports*, 1975, 36(1), 79-85.
- Chelune, Gordon J. (1977), "Disclosure Flexibility and Social-Situational Perceptions," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 45(6), 1139-1143.
- Chelune, Gordon J. (1978), "Nature and assessment of self-disclosing behavior," In P. McReynolds (Ed.), *Advances in psychological assessment* (Vol. 4). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Chelune, Gordon J. (1979), "Measuring Openness in Interpersonal Communication," In G. J. Chelune (Ed.), *Self-disclosure: Origins, patterns and implications of openness in interpersonal relationships* (pp. 151-176). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cheong, Hyuk J. and Margaret A. Morrison (2008), "Consumers' Reliance on Product Information and Recommendations Found in UGC," *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(2), 1-29.
- Cho, Soyeon and Jisu Huh (2010), "Content analysis of corporate blogs as a relationship management tool," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 15(1), 30-48.
- Chou, Yu-Jen, Ching-I Teng, and Shao-Kang Lo (2009), "Mutual self-disclosure online in the B2C context," *Internet Research*, 19(5), 466-478.
- Clark, Margaret S. and Harry T. Reis (1988), "Interpersonal Processes in Close Relationship," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 39, 609-672.
- Collins, Nancy L. and Lynn C. Miller (1994), "Self-Disclosure and Liking: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, 116(3), 457-475.

- Cozby, Paul C. (1973), "Self-disclosure: A literature review," *Psychological Bulletin*, 79(2), 73-91.
- Curtis, John M. (1982), "The effect of therapist self-disclosure on patients' perceptions of empathy, competence and trust in an analogue psychotherapeutic interaction," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 19(1), 54-62.
- Daher, Douglas M. and Paul G. Banikiotes (1976), "Interpersonal Attraction and Rewarding Aspects of Disclosure Content and Level," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 33(4), 492-496.
- Dalto, Carol. A., Icek Ajzen, and Kalman J. Kaplan(1979), "Self-disclosure and attraction: Effects of intimacy and desirability on beliefs and attitudes," *Journal of Research in Personality*, 13(2), 127-138.
- Daugherty, Terry, Matthew E. Eastin, and Laura Bright (2008), "Exploring Consumer Motivations for Creating User-Generated Content," *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(2), 1-2.
- Davis, John. D. and Margaret L. Sloan (1974), "The basis of interviewee matching and interviewer self-disclosure," *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 13(4), 359-367.
- Derlega, Valerian J., James Walmer, and Gail Furman (1973), "Mutual disclosure in social interactions," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 90(1), 159-160.
- Derlega, Valeriann J and Janusz Grzelak (1979), "Appropriateness of self-disclosure," In G. J. Chelune (Ed.), *Self-disclosure: Origins, patterns and implications of openness in interpersonal relationships* (pp. 151-176), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Derlega, Valerian, J. and John H. Berg (1987), "Themes in the study of self-disclosure," In V.J. Derlega and J. H. Berg, (Eds.), *Self-disclosure: Theory, research and therapy* (pp. 1-8). New York: Plenum Press.
- Derlega, Valerian J., Sandra Metts, Sandra Petronio, and Stephen T. Margulis (1993), *Self-disclosure*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Derlega, Valerian J. Barbara A. Winstead, and Kathryn Greene (2008), "Self-Disclosure and Starting a Close Relationship," in Sprecher S., Wenzel A., and Harvey, J. (Eds.), *Handbook of Relationship Initiation* (153-174), Hoboken: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- eMarketer (2009). "Online Social Network Advertising Spending Worldwide, 2008-2013 (billions and % change)." Retrieved on March 30, 2010 from www.emarketer.com.
- Evans, Nicola J. (2010), "Undoing the magic? DVD extras and the pleasure behind the scenes," *Continuum*, 24(4), 587-600.
- Eyesenck, Hans J. (1962), *The Maudsley Personality Inventory*, San Diego, CA: Educational and Industrial Testing Service
- Fitzpatrick, Mary. A. (1987), "Marriage and verbal intimacy," In V. J. Derlega & J. H. Berg (Eds.), *Self-disclosure: Theory, research, and therapy* (pp. 131-154). New York: Plenum.
- Forman, Bruce J. and Brian Whitworth (2005), "Information disclosure and the online customer relationship," Quality, Values and Choice Workshop, Computer Human Interaction 2005, Portland, Oregon, pp. 1-7, available at: <http://www.peterjwild.org/workshops/QVC/Papers/Forman%20and%20Whitworth.h.pdf>
- Fournier, Susan (1998), "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343-373.
- Freud, Sigmund (1989), *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, 1913. Ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W.Norton & Company.
- Gilbert, Shirley J. (1976), "Empirical and theoretical extensions of self-disclosure," in Miller, G.R. (Ed.), *Explorations in Interpersonal Communication*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Glinoga, Mavi and Alastair Tombs (2007), "Backstage visibility: Do the customers care?," In *ANZMAC 2007 Reputation, Responsibility, Relevance: Conference Proceedings*. Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC) Conference 2007, Dunedin, New Zealand, (2541-2549). 3-5 December, 2007.
- Goffman, Erving (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, The Overlook Press, Woodstock, NY.
- Goffman, Erving (1974), *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

- Grayson, Kent (1998), "Customer responses to emotional labour in discrete and relational service exchange," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 9(2), 126-154.
- Grayson, Kent and David Shulman (2000), "Indexicality and the Verification Function of Irreplaceable Possessions: A Semiotic Analysis," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27 (1), 17-30.
- Grove, Stephen J. and Raymond P. Fisk (1989), "Impression management in services marketing: a dramaturgical perspective," in *Impression Management in the Organization* (p. 427-438), Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ.
- Grove, Stephen J. and Raymond P. Fisk (1991), "The dramaturgy of services exchange: an analytical framework for services marketing," in Lovelock, C. (Ed.), *Services Marketing* (p. 59-68), Prentice-Hall, New York, NY.
- Grove, Stephen J. and Raymond P. Fisk (1992), "The service experience as theater," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, 19, 455-461.
- Gummesson, Evert (1990), "Marketing organization in services businesses: the role of the part-time marketer," in Teare, R., Moutinho, L. and Morgan, N. (Eds), *Managing Marketing Services in the 1990s*, Cassell Educational Ltd, London, UK, 35-48.
- Hass, Sarah (2007), *Evaluating brand relationships in the context of brand communities*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Saint Louis University
- Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten, Edward C. Malthouse, Christian Friege, Sonja Gensler, Lara Lobschat, Arvind Rangaswamy, and Bernd Skiera (2010), "The impact of new media on customer relationships," *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 311-330.
- Harvey John H. and Julia Omarzu (1997), "Minding the close relationship," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 1(3), 224-240.
- Herring, Susan C. (2004), "Slouching toward the ordinary: Current trends in computer-mediated Communication," *New Media & Society*, 6(1), 26-36.
- Herring, Susan C., Lois Ann Scheidt, Inna Kouper, and Elijah Wright (2005), "A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Weblogs: 2003-2004," In M. Tremayne (Ed.), *Citizenship and the Future of Media* (p. 3-20), London: Routledge.
- Hess, Jeff and John Story (2005), "Trust-based commitment: multidimensional consumer-brand relationships," *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 22(6), 313 – 322.

- Hevern, Vincent W. (2004), "Threaded Identity in Cyberspace: Weblogs and Positioning in the Dialogical Self," *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 4(4), 321–335.
- Hinde, Robert A. (1976), "On Describing Relationships," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 17(Jan), 1-19.
- Hollenbaugh, Erin (2010), "Motives for Maintaining Personal Journal Blogs," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the NCA 95th Annual Convention, Chicago Hilton & Towers, Chicago, IL.
- Im, Seunghee, Doo-Hee Lee, Charles R. Taylor, and Catheline D'Orazio (2008), "The Influence of Consumer Self-Disclosure on Web Sites on Advertising Response," *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 9(1), 37-48.
- Jiang, L. Crystal, Natalie N. Bazarova, and Jeffrey T. Hancock (2011), "The Disclosure-Intimacy Link in Computer-Mediated Communication: An Attributional Extension of the Hyperpersonal Model," *Human Communication Research*, 37(1), 58-77.
- Jones, Edwards. E. and Richard L. Archer (1976), "Are there special effects of personalistic self-disclosure?," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 12(2), 180-193.
- Journard, Sidney. M. (1971), *Self-disclosure: An experimental analysis of the transparent self*, New York: Wiley.
- Kaplan, Andreas M. and Michael Haenlein (2010), "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media," *Business Horizons*, 53 (1), 59–68.
- Kim, Hey-Tyoung and Yoo Jin Kwon (2011), "Soulmates, Best Friends, and Casual Buddies: The Relationship of U.S. College Students to Retailer Brands," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 29(1), 67-82.
- Kirk, R (1968), *Experimental Design: procedures for the behavioral sciences*. California, USA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Kleinke, Chris. L. (1979), "Effects of personal evaluations," In G. J. Chelune (Ed.), *Self-disclosure: Origins, patterns, and implications of openness in interpersonal relationships*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kleinke, Chris. L. and Margi L. Kahn (1980), "Perceptions of self-disclosers: Effects of sex and physical attractiveness," *Journal of Personality*, 48(2), 190-205.

- Kleman, Erin. E. (2007), "Journaling for the World (Wide Web) to See: A Proposed Model of Self-Disclosure Intimacy in Blogs," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the NCA 93rd Annual Convention, Chicago, IL.
- Kuhn, Andrea & Kelli S. Burns (2008), "From MySpace To Brandspace: Elements Of Brand-Sponsored MySpace Profiles," *American Academy of Advertising Conference Proceedings*, 242-255.
- Lee, Mira and Seounmi Youn (2009), "Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) - how eWOM platforms influence consumer product judgement," *International Journal of Advertising*, 28(3) , 473-499.
- Lee, H., Park., S.R. and Hwang, T. (2008), "Corporate-level blogs of the Fortune 500 companies: an empirical investigation of content and design," *International Journal of Information Technology and Management*, 7(2), 134-148.
- Lenhart, Amenda and Susannah Fox (2006), "Bloggers: A portrait of the Internet's new storytellers," *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. Retrieved December 1, 2010 from <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP Bloggers Report July 19 2006.pdf>
- Lovelock, Christopher H. (1991), *Services Marketing*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- MacCannell, Dean (1976), *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Schlocken Books, New York, NY.
- Lutters, Wayne G. and Mark S. Ackerman (2003), "Joining the backstage: locality and centrality in an online community," *Information Technology & People*, 16(2), 157-182
- Mazera, Joseph P., Richard E. Murphy, and Cheri J. Simonds (2007), "I'll See You On "Facebook": The Effects of Computer-Mediated Teacher Self-Disclosure on Student Motivation, Affective Learning, and Classroom Climate," *Communication Education*, 56(1), 1-17.
- Mazera, Joseph P., Richard E. Murphy, and Cheri J. Simonds (2009), "The effects of teacher self-disclosure via Facebook on teacher credibility," *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34(2), 175-183.
- McDonald, Lorraine and Ian Stuart-Hamilton (2000), "The Meaning of Life: Animism in the Classificatory Skills of Older Adults," *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 51(3), 231-242.

- McKenna, Katelyn Y. A., John A. Bargh (1999), "Causes and Consequences of Social Interaction on the Internet: A Conceptual Framework," *Media Psychology*, 1(3), 249–269.
- Miller, Kenneth E. (2004), "Beyond the Frontstage: Trust, Access, and the Relational Context in Research with Refugee Communities," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 33(3-4), 217-227.
- Morton, Teru. L. (1978), "Intimacy and reciprocity of exchange: A comparison of spouses and strangers," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36(1), 72-81.
- Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), "Brand Community," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-432.
- Nardi, Bonnie A., Schiano Diane J., Michelle Gumbrecht, and Luke Swartz (2004), "Why we blog," *Communications of the ACM*, 47 (12), 41-46.
- O'Cass, Aron (2002), "Political Advertising Believability and Information Source Value During Elections," *Journal of Advertising*, XXXI(1), 63-74.
- Parks, Malcom R. and Kory Floyd (1995), "Making Friends in Cyberspace," *Journal of Communication*, 46(1), 80-97.
- Pearce, W. Barnett and Stewart M. Sharp (1973), "Self-disclosing Communication," *Journal of Communication*, 23(4), 409-425.
- Pederson, Darhl M. and Kenneth L. Higbee (1969), "Self-disclosure and relationship to the target person," *Merrill- Palmer Quarterly*, 15(2), 213-220.
- Perlman, Daniel and Beverley Fehr (1987), "The development of intimate relationships," In D. Perlman & S. W. Duck (Eds.), *Intimate relationships: Development, dynamics and deterioration*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- Petty, Richard E. and Herbert L. Mirels (1981), "Intimacy and Scarcity of Self-Disclosure: Effects on Interpersonal Attraction for Males and Females," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 7(3), 493-503.
- Qualman, Erik (2009), *Socialnomics*, Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Redfearn, J. W. T. (1982), "When are Things Persons and Persons Things?," *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 27(3), 215-237.

- Reis, Harry. T. and Phillip Shaver (1988), "Intimacy as an interpersonal process," In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and interventions*, Chichester, England: Wiley.
- Rempel, John K., John G. Holmes, and Mark P. Zanna (1985), "Trust in close relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49(1), 95-112.
- Rousseau, Denise M., Sim B. Bitkin, Ronald S. Burt, and Colin Camerer (1998), "Not so different after all: a cross-discipline view of trust," *Academy of Management Review*, 23(3), 393-404.
- Rosenfeld, L. B., and Jean M. Civikly (1976), *With Words Unspoken: The Nonverbal Experience*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Harvey, John H. and Julia Omarzu (1997), "Minding the Close Relationship," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 1(3), 224-240.
- Rubin, Zick (1973), "Liking and loving: An invitation to social psychology," New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Schlenker, Barry. R. (1980), *Impression Management: The Self-Concept, Social Identity, and Interpersonal Relations*, Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Shagnessy, Robert (2009), "Behind the Scenes," *Shakespeare Survey*, 62, 236-248.
- Solomon, Michael R., Carol Surprenant, John A. Czepiel, and Evelyn G. Gutman (1985), "A role theory perspective on dyadic interactions: the service encounter," *Journal of Marketing*, 49(1), 99- 111.
- Shostack, G.Lynn (1981), "How to design a service," in Donnelly, J.H. and George, W.R. (Eds), *Marketing of Services*, American Marketing Association, Chicago, IL.
- Shostack, G. Lynn (1987), "Service positioning through structural change," *Journal of Marketing*, 51(1), 34-43.
- Sohn, Dongyoung (2009), "Disentangling the Effects of Social Network Density on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) Intention," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(2), 352-367.
- Stefanone, Michael A. and Chyng-Yang Jang (2008), "Writing for Friends and Family: The Interpersonal Nature of Blogs," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), Retrieved December 20, 2010 from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/stefanone.html>

- Stern, Barbara B. (1997), "Advertising Intimacy: Relationship Marketing and the Services Consumer," *Journal of Advertising*, 26(4), 7-19.
- Sternberg, Robert J. (1988), *The Triangle of Love: Intimacy, Passion, Commitment*, New York: Basic Books.
- Sullivan, Harry S. (1953), *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- Sung, Yongjun, Yoojung Kim, Ohyeon Kwon, Jangho Moon (2010), "An Explorative Study of Korean Consumer Participation in Virtual Brand Communities in Social Network Sites," *Journal of Global Marketing*, 23(5), 430-445.
- Sung, Youngjun and Sejung Marina Choi (2010), "I won't leave you although you disappoint me": The interplay between satisfaction, investment, and alternatives in determining consumer–brand relationship commitment," *Psychology and Marketing*, 27(11), 1050-1073.
- Tardy, Charles., and Dindia, Kathryn (2006), "Self-disclosure: Strategic revelation of personal information in personal and professional relationships," In O. Hargie (Ed.), *A Handbook of Communication Skills third edition*. London: Routledge.
- Taylor, Dalmas A. (1979), "Motivational bases," In G. J. Chelune (Ed.), *Self-disclosure: Origins, patterns, and implications of openness in interpersonal relationships*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Taylor, Dalmas A., Leonard Oberlander (1969), "Person-Perception and Self-Disclosure: Motivational Mechanisms in Interpersonal Processes," *Journal of Experimental Research in Personality*, 4(1), 14-28.
- Taylor, Dalmas A., Robert J. Gould, Paul J. Brounstein (1981), "Effect of Personalistic self-disclosure," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 7(3), 487-492.
- Thorbjornsen, Helge, Magne Supphellen, Herbjorn Nysveen, and Per E. Pedersen (2002), "Building brand relationships online: A comparison of two interactive applications," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 16(3), 17-34.
- Tidwell, L. Collins and Joseph B. Walther (2002), "Computer-mediated communication effects on disclosure, impressions, and interpersonal evaluations: Getting to know one another a bit at a time," *Human Communication Research*, 28(3), 317-348.
- Trammell, Kaye. D. and Alek Keshelashvili (2005), "Examining the new influencers: A self-presentation study of A-list blogs," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82 (4), 968–982.

- Verna, Paul (2007), "User-Generated Content: Will Web 2.0 Pay Its Way?" *eMarketer*, June 2007, Retrieved December 1, 2010 from http://www.emarketer.com/Report.aspx?code=emarketer_2000421.
- Viegas, Fernanda B. (2005), "Bloggers' Expectations of Privacy and Accountability: An Initial Survey," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(3), Retrieved December 20, 2010 from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue3/viegas.html>
- Wang, Sijun, Sharon E. Beatty, and William Foxx (2004), "Signaling the trustworthiness of small online retailers," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), 53-69.
- Wheeless, Lawrence R. (1976), "Self-disclosure and interpersonal solidarity: Measurement, validation, and relationships," *Human Communication Research*, 3(1), 47-60.
- Wheeless, Lawrence R. and Janis Grotz (2006), "The measurement of trust and its relationship to self-disclosure," *Human Communication Research*, 3(3), 250-257.
- White, Tiffany B. (2004), "Consumer Disclosure Avoidance: A Motivational Framework," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1&2), 41-51.
- Worthy, Morgan, Albert L. Gary and Gay M. Kahn (1969), "Self-disclosure as an exchange process," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 13(1), 59-63.
- Wortman, Camille B. and Peter Adesman and Elliot Herman (1976), "Self-disclosure: An attributional perspective," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 33(2), 184-191.